Legends of my Bungalow

LEGENDS OF MEMORIAM

FREDERICK [illegible]

LEGENDS OF MY BUNGALOW

BY

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WITH A FRONTISPIECE.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED.
1882.

WESTMINSTER:
J. B. NICHOLS AND SONS, PRINTERS,
25, PARLIAMENT STREET.

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LEGENDS OF MY BUNGALOW.

I HAVE reached that time of life when a man gets drowsy after dinner. The habit of sleeping little will cling to a traveller when the need of more rest makes itself quite perceptible, and hence arises a feeling which seemed very portentous when I first experienced it: an inclination to sit still and look at nothing for an hour. But the sensation has grown to be pleasant. My cottage is lumbered with strange objects: weapons and skins, old armour, horns, Asian carpets, works of art, outlandish furniture. In the less known parts of every continent I have gathered such things as struck my eye by beauty, or rarity, or interest. A few of these referred to in the pages that follow are shown in the frontispiece. "A Cabinet" is sufficiently conspicuous. Upon the wall behind hangs "A Helmet." On the table "A Clock Ornament," "An Afghan Knife," and "A Montenegrin Struka," may be identified by readers with quick sight; and upon the floor lie "Some Skins" and "A Stool." The Mantelpiece displayed is not that to which the fourteenth legend relates. That stands in another room, but the one here shown is its fellow, also of Mooltan pottery. As I loll in a huge armchair, which bears its date between two sculptured monsters on the back, "1689," wandering fancy recalls or invents for each object in my bungalow a tale. Some, of course, are simply recollections; others pure fiction; but the most part are a mingling of reality and waking dreams. Of the latter class is the story which has attached itself to the first legend of my bungalow which I transcribe.

LEGEND FIRST.

A CABINET.

I shall always regret that fortune did not lead me to Bulgaria during Turkish rule. No one could be more thoroughly convinced that the sovereignty of the Porte in Europe is an anachronism and a misplacement, though to arrange the succession lies beyond my ingenuity. But I should have liked to see with my own eyes the manner of government which is accused of transforming men like ourselves into the wretched creatures we found in Bulgaria. It will be seen that the districts whereof I write had not, in the memory of persons living, been subjected to violence or open wrong. I have no prejudices and no party spirit: Turk and Bulgar are each the same to me, a race to observe and report upon with such ability and conscience as I have. Had my eyes beheld the awful testimony which came before our ill-starred friend, MacGahan, I should not have been less warm than he; perhaps I should not have kept that equable and temperate spirit which he showed in friendly converse. But no atrocities were charged against the Moslem north of the Balkans. If, indeed, his ascendancy be responsible for the degra-

dation of the Bulgar, there, at least, it worked by moral, or I should say by immoral, means, not by brute force. One asked in vain for a charge of physical ill-treatment or oppression. Assuming that the Bulgar has latent in him such capacity for good works and honourable feelings as is possessed by the Russian moujik, I am sorry that the chance did not present itself of observing the system by which he has been so utterly debased.

A cabinet in my drawing-room is associated with the Russo-Turkish war—I call it a cabinet, but I am not an expert at upholstery, and this thing is my own design. Four doors, about two feet high by fifteen inches wide, deeply and boldly carved in a very dark wood unidentified, are set in a body of palest oak. Above them is a row of plaques, of old china; a story attaches to these also, but it has not properly a place among the legends. The interest of this piece of furniture lies in its doors, which were panels in the massive portal of the Grand Mufti's harem at Tirnova. It has not been my fate, up to the present, to behold the sacking of a town. I have seen villages burnt and cities bombarded, but the old-fashioned sack would be an anachronism more glaring even than the government of Turkey. The nearest approach to it which I shall probably witness was the aspect of Tirnova in the early days of July, 1877.

The surroundings of the city are delightful. It hangs

upon the shoulder of a hill, wooded, craggy, precipitous. A foaming, tumbling river intersects it, and the steep gorge rings all day with laughter of children bathing. A massive bridge spans the torrent, so old that the tradition of its building has been lost. From either end narrow lanes wind upwards, or follow the ravine, amidst open stalls and houses one above another. An uncouth and filthy throng occupies the roadway; pavement there is none. In his thick jacket bound with fir, his baggy breeches, slippered bare feet, and tarboosh, the Bulgar plods along, with a sullen glance in his eyes puckered with cunning. His women tail behind, carrying the market produce, or the household gear just bought; they wear a single cotton garment, whereof the colour is dirt, and the shape lost in rags and patches. You waste your time, and, if a sporting man, your cash, in guessing the age of these female creatures. Betwixt twenty and fifty years the Bulgar woman has nothing to distinguish her time of life; unless one carefully removed the layers of dirt, and counted them, as the age of a tree is estimated by its rings of growth.

Tirnova presented such a scene as is beheld after a large auction of furniture in a poor neighbourhood, but on a scale vastly greater. Half the population was engaged in transporting the property of the other half. Every member of a family assisted according to his strength. Upon his round but powerful shoulders the

house-father bore a load of wood-work, often carved. The sturdy mother toiled beneath a battery of cooking pots. The children carried sacks of clothing, window-frames, and such light articles. I asked of them, through my interpreter, where lodgings could be had; they blankly scowled, and passed on silent. At length we met an unwholesome looking youth in European clothes, who, at the first word, came up to me and said in English: "And how are you? Fine weather! That is a nice horse; what did you give for her? How do you like Tirnova?" I politely asked him to recommend me lodgings, and he answered with a laugh: "Oh, you can take any of these Turkish houses. Tenez, there is the Grand Mufti's round the corner, which has a stable. You will see it on the right, a pink building. I will call presently. Good-bye now!" He did call, and I saw plenty of the gentleman until we parted at Plevna. The Grand Duke had ordered him to join Skobeleff, who was marching in Lovcha, and his fright was pitiable. In truth, no one envied the poor fellow that journey, but lamentations would not avail him.

The house was found; a clean, even a handsome building, outside as in. The horses disposed in a humid stable, pitch dark, I climbed a broad staircase to the first, the living floor. It may be interesting to describe a Turco-Bulgar mansion of the better class, as it was four years ago. The staircase opened in the middle of the

public room, and the well thus formed was surrounded by a balustrade. All the length of the house, towards the street, had been glazed; but the casements, neatly unscrewed, had vanished. An elegant lattice-work outside kept that privacy which Turks love. This public room might be some twenty feet square, wainscoted, and surrounded by a divan eight or ten inches high and four feet broad. The ceiling was wooden, unpainted, representing as it were a sun, with rays diverging; of the same pattern were most ceilings I observed. Not a stick of furniture remained, not a rag on the divans; but wall, wood, floor, were clean as a platter newly scrubbed. Two doors on either side led to a suite of apartments panelled with simple but effective carvings, provided with divans and innumerable cupboards in the wainscot. These stood open and bare. The very stoves had been wrecked, and the floor of every room was covered six inches deep with wool—the stuffing of divans and cushions, ripped up in the search for treasure, and gutted for convenience of folding the embroidery of the outer cases. The sanitary arrangements, the bath, and kitchen, were excellent in their way.

I never found more comfortable quarters. For the first time since crossing the Danube my rest was not disturbed by vermin. But still I was not happy. The closest examination of localities, the deepest study of the building, did not reveal to me the Grand Mufti's harem.

What is a Turkish house destitute of a harem? An imposition and a fraud! It was possible, of course, that the Grand Mufti had been a bachelor; but even in that case he would no more build a house destitute of the gynaceum than would a British teetotaller suppress the cellarage. But he was not a bachelor. In calling upon Archibald Forbes, who lived down the street, his landlady assured me that my absent host had at least one wife. The search was renewed, still vainly. Beside the mansion lay a garden, surrounded by high walls, too damp and shaded as I thought for flowers; but the Moslem horticulturist had contrived to keep a pretty show. This pleasaunce apparently could not be entered direct from the house. A substantial gateway opened upon the street, but I found no door on my side. This fact deterred me from exploring; besides, the only edifice there seemed to be a shed, full of rubbish and broken tools, along the far side. One day, however, I perceived a narrow crevice behind the stove, scarcely a foot in width, and evidently a semi-secret passage—corridor it could not be named. Squeezing through this fissure, I reached daylight at a slit above the garden. In former times, doubtless, there had been a ladder here, but it was absent. Warning my servants, I dropped to earth, and crossed towards the shed.

By accident or design the Grand Mufti had concealed his harem with extraordinary skill. It had not escaped

plunder, of course. There would be women in the town who knew where to look for it, and whose earliest foray would be in this direction; but little or no damage had been done by the looters, who contented themselves with carrying off every rag and stick about the premises, saving two or three little worthless caps and shoes. The shed beneath was just what I had fancied, but very much deeper. Old casks and pack-saddles, worn-out pots and tools, straw, boxes and bottles, almost filled it; but a passage was clear to the foot of a staircase, which mounted to the zenana. Its solid door stood open, betwixt posts and lintels handsomely carved. Inside them was a number of small low rooms, a bath with stove and water-tank, and a kitchen. I wonder if the maids quarrelled over the use of that very simple cooking apparatus? In form it was just like those found in Pompeian houses, and in principle it resembled the ovens which our sepoys build so quickly and so easily on campaign. Upon a solid bench of clay little partitions had been raised, like three bricks forming the Greek "pi," and the charcoal lay in them, dead and dusty. My most careful search of the abandoned chambers revealed no loot. Pretty and comfortable they had been when the naked divans were covered and the curtains hung at window and door. I found one of the large iron rings in place, and holes whence others had been wrenched. From this harem very likely came the

satin trousers, superbly broidered at waist and ankle, the muslin jackets worked with silver, and the beautiful handkerchiefs, which a Russian offered me for sale outside the town. The Grand Mufti had escaped with three carts, but they would not hold all his family and treasures.

Children had lived here; that was certain. Besides the evidence of those little caps and shoes, I found a pile of writing-copies and "sums" upon a shelf, and a heap of letters. It would seem that Turkish dames resemble others of their sex in a passion for correspondence. I knew that a quantity had been removed, probably for translation, since the shed beneath and the way to the garden entrance were littered with them; but a large quantity remained, and I gathered a few of those which seemed most likely to be interesting; it does not dwell in my memory, however, that I did anything with them. Almost every Turkish house, here as elsewhere, contained exercises in writing and arithmetic. Education is valued by Mahomedans, but circumstances rarely permit it to be carried far. As to letters, the streets of Sistof, Tirnova, Selvie, and all places where the Turk had dwelt, were dotted with them for weeks after the exodus.

With a covetous longing I admired the carved panels of the harem door. In fancy I saw them made into some such pieee of furniture as that which now

adorns my bungalow, and I knew that they would infallibly be burnt if not removed. But housebreaking is not an idea which readily enters the well-disciplined mind. One has no scruple in appropriating a souvenir that lies loose and abandoned of an owner who can never be discovered; but to break doors is another thing somehow. Bad examples, however, are contagious. A dozen times a day I was disturbed by the visit of foraging parties. They now carried tools, and the pretty woodwork of my quarters rapidly vanished. Many of the plundering gangs were wholly composed of women, or, I would rather say, beings of the female sex.

I remember one droll visit. Some dozen granddams clad in nameless rags entered when I was writing. It should have been remarked that there was a loft above the public room; I never thought it worth exploring. My table, as it chanced, was set just opposite to the ladder, not unhandsome, which led to this portion of the building. I did not interfere with the proceedings of these ancient dames, who had the same right of admittance as myself. But they interfered with me. Gesticulating and screaming, they surrounded my table, and I might have taken them for avenging spirits. My interpreter was not present, and it occupied a time long enough to make me irritable before I guessed the cause of their excitement. Not unused to the language of

signs, it gradually dawned upon my intellect that these hideous old persons objected to pursue their burglarious intentions up aloft whilst I sat twenty feet away with my back to them, writing. I trust I have as great regard for propriety as most gentlemen, but experience has taught me that savages delight in teasing, overawing, and generally giving trouble to the civilised man. Therefore, in pantomime as intelligible as their own, I told them that I would not move, that it was utterly indifferent to me whether or not they climbed the ladder, and that I had more important things on hand than their tiresome impertinence. So the eldest one of the crew—she was eighty, if a day—stood in front of me whilst the others bound their skirts with rope. It is needless to say that I did not look round.

Russian officers advised me, with a laugh, to take and keep the panels, if I pleased; but for a while instinct revolted. At length, one of these wandering gangs broke into my garden, which had hitherto been sacred. A family it was—man, wife, and several ugly youngsters. They had already picked up some dozen window-sashes and carved boards, which they carefully disposed against the wall before mounting to the harem. I could stand it no longer. The husband was apparently a carpenter; at least, he carried certain weird and mystic implements, of shape, I imagine, unchanged since Byzantine days. This hireling was set to work, and in half-an-hour he

brought me the panels, received a rouble, and departed, carrying off the "balance" of the door. For awhile I was rather ashamed of my trophy; but as no one seems to think the worse of me my feelings have grown callous. One reconciles oneself to anything, even burglary. And the Grand Mufti himself would be consoled, observing how fine his carvings look in their new mounting.

And now to the legend. Poking about one day in the back part of the main dwelling, I found a bath chamber which had hitherto escaped notice; you understand that my quarters covered a large space. It had a cupboard, untouched by the spoiler, which was full of dry bloody rags and bandages. Closer examination showed dark stains upon the floor, and I conjectured that a person grievously wounded had lain there bleeding whilst his hurts were dressed. It has been mentioned that the Bulgarian dame with whom Forbes lodged had some knowledge of the Mufti. This we discovered by her recital of a long-winded grievance, whereof all that I remember is the fact that it somehow concerned a distillery. The Mufti had wronged her, and she said he was a wicked old man; not very, very wicked for a Turk, but a villain of the deepest dye compared with Christians.

I told this matron of the discovery, and she said at once: "His son must have reached home after all.

Fancy that! The proud youth went to join Suliman Pasha as soon as it was known that he was advancing from Montenegro. He took with him more than a hundred volunteers from this city. Paulovitch, the priest, went after him, and it was said that he killed every one in the Balkans. I suppose Ibrahim escaped. If our people had known he was in the house they would have torn it brick from brick when the Russians crossed the Danube."

"Was he more wicked than his father, then?"

"I don't know that. But he rode about on his horses, dressed in fine blue cloth, with embroideries and scarves and yataghans and what not, looking down at Bulgars as if they were dirt."

I thought to myself that an inability to distinguish between the substantive "dirt" and the adjective "dirty" was not an offence deserving death.

"Was he handsome?" I asked.

"I suppose so, for a Turk! He made eyes at any girl so irreligious as to look at him. But without his feathers the peacock is blacker than the crow." These words seemed to be directed to little Sitza, who was in our company. She blushed, but that proved nothing, for it was her habit. Sitza had a tongue, and she answered sharply: "You talk nonsense, mother! Girls can't walk blindfold. Ibrahim Effendi made eyes at none of us. He just rode to and from his father's house, and if one

was in the street of course one saw him. What kind of unnatural monsters will these English gentlemen think us? There is no girl in Tirnova who would willingly have looked at an infidel." Little Sitza was about the only girl at whom an infidel would willingly have looked. She washed.

"Well, well," cried the mother, "when Heaven sends a curse it is useless to shut one's eyes. I will inquire about that action in the Balkans. Depend upon it, Ibrahim escaped, for the Mufti would have opened his doors to no one else."

From what the old lady gathered it appears that this band of Turkish youths set out to cross the mountains about a week before the Russians invaded Bulgaria. Why did they not use the Shipka pass it is vain to speculate. There was still a large force at Gabrova, and the road was strongly held. The rush of fugitives had begun, but the great majority of the Mahomedan people lingered until news came of the forcing of the Danube. The Turks, who seemed so indifferent to Christian progress and civilisation, are sufficiently acute to know that theirs is a hopeless cause. Habit has used them to defeat, and if they struggle bravely it is without hope of ultimate success. Prophets differ as to the time when mass will again be celebrated in St. Sophia, but no Turk doubts that his creed must ultimately vanish—from Europe, that is. The public opinion of Mahomedan

countries which do not march with Christian is very different. The Afghans, for instance, with all their shrewdness of local insight, know nothing of the general condition of the world, and they think, of course, that Islam runs as good a chance as any creed of conquering the earth. The Turks, better instructed, fled as soon as Russia threatened them on their own side the river. This does not mean that all Christianity in arms would have daunted the gallant soldiers of the Crescent. I am perfectly satisfied that the aforesaid mass will not be sung till streams of blood have flowed. But it accounts for the exodus of peaceful Moslem from Bulgaria.

Ibrahim Effendi and his comrades proposed to use the Hankoi Pass, shortly to be traversed by the raiding force of General Ghorko. Their intention could not be kept secret, and Paulovitch led out his band to intercept them. Swelled by fanatical volunteers they outnumbered the Turks, but their arms were inferior, and, man for man, they would not have stood a chance. It might reasonably be thought, however, that with the advantage of surprise, of position, and of the loss caused by a volley at close quarters, they would rout the enemy. Paulovitch laid his ambush half-way up the pass and waited. Late in the afternoon a considerable force was seen advancing, and the Bulgars recognised with alarm a strong Turkish patrol, horse and foot. The circumcised dogs still lay at Elena, but it was not their habit to explore the roads at

night. Paulovitch had no design of open fighting. He saw that his enterprise was discovered, and guessed the informer. In gloomy silence, cherishing revenge, the Bulgars slipped away, easily escaping notice in the woods and gullies. And lo! just as darkness set in, the traitor was delivered into their hands.

The priest declares that this was the Lord's doing, and all Tirnova accepts his pious view of things with acclamation. For my own part, I believe that even a Turk who saves from massacre his unoffending countryman and his bosom friend is not condemned by Heaven. This so-called traitor was a harmless Moslem of Elena, personally attached to Ibrahim Effendi. From a commanding rock, himself unseen apparently, he had watched the Bulgars pass, and had hastened to warn both the victims and the commandant. Returning from his errand, he fell in with the savage priest and his followers. They offered him life if he would confess what by-path Ibrahim had taken, and I am sorry to admit that the terms were accepted. Yet, it may be, if these lonely woods could tell their secret, we should marvel and shudder at the heroism of this poor wretch. But he gave way; and then the Bulgars "cut him up like a lamb," as one of their fellows boasted to my interpreter at Sistof. So they went rejoicing on their way, for there was still time to intercept the Moslem, who had halted long at the hour of prayer.

The moon gave light enough for climbing the unperilous Balkan steeps, which most of these men, half-brigand, half-smuggler, could have traversed blindfold. Before midnight they had reached a shadowy spot well suited for their purpose. If the Turks had not escaped them they must soon arrive. Paulovitch divided his men, posting half on either side the road, where, in the gloom of trees and cliffs, an army might have passed them unawares. Scarcely were they stationed when a ring of hoofs on naked stone, faintly echoing up the hill, announced the enemy's approach. The Turks marched carelessly, some on horseback, some on foot, in broken groups. Ibrahim was recognised among the foremost riders, conspicuous for the beauty of his steed and the sheen of his gold-worked scarf, which glittered in the moonlight. The Bulgars thrilled to look upon their prey; for the greater number of Turks had snatched this opportunity to transport some of their valuables, and their packs were heavy. It was too great temptation. Before the word was given the party occupying one flank discharged a volley. Many Turks dropped, but the survivors, undismayed, charged furiously into the gloom. The Bulgars could not face that onset. Those who stood their ground were cut to pieces, but the majority fled. Panic-stricken by this change of rôles, the ambush occupying the other flank turned without a shot, and in the excitement of the

victorious Turks no one perceived the commotion of this rout.

With voice and blows Paulovitch rallied them and brought them back after some minutes. They found the enemy engaged in dragging out the corpses, which they recognised with savage glee, or attending to their fellows. Presently all gathered in a group around the pile of severed heads. The Bulgars could not miss that target, and, at the sharp command of Paulovitch, they fired point-blank into the throng. The Turks fell in one struggling mass. Not a score remained upright, and they, after an instant's pause of stupefaction, sprang off and disappeared. Ibrahim shouted and implored in vain. He sat upon his plunging horse till the Christians rushed on him from the wood; then, doubled over the pommel, he went full gallop down the hill. Half-a-dozen of the bravest Bulgars followed. No horse could thread that path at speed, and when the pursuers returned to claim their portion of the booty, carrying the blood-stained scarf which Ibrahim had worn, no one doubted their victorious tale. But, if the young hero fell, whose were the gory bandages I discovered in his father's house?

For myself I hope and believe that he escaped. No offence was laid against him worse than manly beauty, a love of horses, and becoming dress. If these be crimes, in what a perilous state is the youth of Britain!

This I honestly and solemnly declare, that if Ibrahim Effendi appeared to claim the familiar panels which shielded his mother and his sisters he should have them, cabinet and all; that is, if he had the heart to rob me.

LEGEND SECOND.

A GUN-RACK.

In the glazed porch of my dwelling, nearly hidden at summer time by flowers and climbing plants, this trophy hangs. In younger days, when I kept and eke employed a little arsenal of fire-arms, they rested on a very curious frame. My guns and rifles now are carried by more active hands, saving an old Snider carbine, rusted and jammed in the breach, but loaded I know. It is the merest detail, quite unimportant for our legend; but I will rise from my desk and see what dusty rubbish now fills the place of those nobler instruments. Imprimis, an almond-stick cut in the garden of the Arx at Candahar. A thorn-stick from the Khoord Khyber; how that brawny old Pathan gashed his legs in winning it, and how coolly he staunched the rushing blood with earth! A hunting-crop with metal head, strangely dinted and misshapen, I do not remember how. Two fly-rods. The skull and beak of a rhinoceros hornbill. An Egyptian pipe-stem of cherry-wood. A riding-whip, mended with a silver plate and a bit of wire by the blacksmith of San José de Costa Rica. A walking-stick of iron-wood,

heavy as a metal bar, which once formed half of a Bornean spear-shaft; I lost the other half, an older favourite, at Sistof on the Danube, in the late war. But even this has travelled with me, by land and river and ocean, many many thousand miles.

They are very curious and pretty horns which compose my gun-rack Once on a time, in guilelessness of heart, I committed myself to certain definitions in zoology, a science I have studied rather with my eyes than with my brain. They were wrong, no doubt, for all the flaccid pack of bone-collectors set upon and mouthed me in their toothless jaws. I left them at it, starting for another course of practical experience. But the incident warns me to be careful in descriptions of technical sort. We used to think in Borneo that the kijong is an antelope, but probably enough we were mistaken. Whatever its class, it is a pretty little beast, chestnut coloured, standing about two feet high, and very good to eat. One half the surface of its horns is clothed with skin and hair; a spreading rim marks the point whence springs the true antler. Over the forehead a little branch curls inward. The tips bend to meet each other, with a slight inclination backwards. Five pairs on either side form the rack; at top and bottom of the frame are horns similar at first glance, but one of them is seen to be radically different on examination. No curling rim sets off the root of the antler, which rises straight, diverging outward. There

is no sign of a branch, and the width of the forehead is greater. For sixteen years, more or less, I have been intending to submit that pair of horns to scientific scrutiny; for I have reason to believe it represents a species unknown.

To the best of my recollection, these kijongs were all shot or speared in the nets. It is wonderous luck to catch the little creatures in the open. Hardly can the European eye perceive the small deer of Borneo when it browses at sunset amongst the low close brushwood of the slopes. Its antler-tips alone are visible above the stalks and branches, betraying it to the keen-sighted Dyak by their motion. If the least wind be stirring, your best glass will scarcely serve you. The guide trembles with impatience as he directs your gaze: for the sun is going down, mists are rising in the valley where you crouch, blue shadows swiftly mount to quench the lurid glow still burning up above. His eyes sparkle as he whispers, in a breath scarce audible at three feet distance. His ornaments softly tinkle with the quiver of his body, like that of a greyhound in the leash. When after a patient search your dull eye sees as it were a twig that moves amongst that sheeny, glossy tangle—when the Dyak marks the steadying of your glance—he rises suddenly, his head and neck above the foliage. That is the moment. If your sight is strained upon the proper place, you will see for one short second a small graceful head upraised, large

ears pricked forward, dark eyes fixed on you. Upon your conduct at this crisis will depend your supper.

But the kijong is too small to show the slightest sign above the brushwood, and too wary to be often caught at salt-pans or drinking-places. In fact I do not remember to have heard any sportsman boast of having shot one fairly—in the open, that is. He differs from the exquisite p'landok, the mouse-deer, in being wholly a jungle animal. P'landok are fond of grass, and with the extremest caution the lovely little creatures may be stalked. I have somewhere the skull of one shot just outside my garden fence at Sibi; the smallest of toy terriers has a bigger head.

One day, whilst I was dressing skins of birds or snakes or what not, an old Kennowit chief sat watching me. "What a fool the lord is!" he observed to my interpreter.

I have come to think that this opinion of my character mildly expressed the views of long-suffering Ali, but he was hugely indignant. "This Kennowit man say you fool, Sir," he exclaimed. "What he mean, the ignorant heathen?"

"Ask him!" I replied; and it was done with emphasis. The worthy savage explained that no one right in his head would abandon the luxuries of Belati to pick up feathers and rubbish on the other side the world. "For," said he, with the frankness of his un-

couth people, "he does not collect things worth having. There are charms amongst us Kennowits, as everybody knows, really useful; but when my brother offered him for sale the wondrous stone discovered in a snake's belly he would not have it. Look at those horns he is taking to Belati; common kijong's, and rusa's, pig's tusks, and snake's teeth. I possess the horn of a p'landok! Its fellow was brass, and I melted it to make this siri-box. That is a real charm. What will he give?"

"Show it me!" I said, not without interest, when the chief's words had been duly translated. The p'landok is supposed to have no horns, and I never saw an example to the contrary; but a belief prevails, wherever this animal is found, that very rare individuals have some kind of excrescence on the forehead. When the Kennowit produced his specimen, however, it was evidently no more than a kijong horn, malformed and stunted. There were other things in the basket which contained it, a tambok of split rattans, prettily dyed and plaited. Turning it over, I examined the chief's stock of fetishes. They were the silliest rubbish possible, tusks and bones and teeth, bits of wood curiously twisted, knots of hair and pebbles.

"Why," I said to Ali, "this Kennowit man himself lays store by kijong horns!" holding up the proof. My interpreter laughed roughly, triumphing over the Kafir, and all the savages assembled made merry at their

lord's expense. But he cried: "That a kijong? It is the charm on which our village depends for its prosperity. No kijong ever had horns like those! They came off the head of an antu." Then he pointed out the differences which I have mentioned as characterising the top pair of my gun-rack. His people listened with awe.

"Tell him I will give a quarter-dollar for the thing!" I said to Ali, taking my gun for the evening stroll. The Kennowit scorned to answer, and I went my way. Later at night, when we had reassembled round the fires, I heard the following story. It needs all the evidence forthcoming to persuade me sometimes that I am the same living man who blithely underwent the experiences of my youth. Scenes vastly more impressive than any I recall from Borneo have passed before my eyes since then. No doubt of their reality disturbs me, but I could almost fancy, now and again, that my long sojourn in the far East was a dream.

We sat in the covered verandah of the house, perched forty feet above the ground. Fires blazed from space to space down the shadowy vista, for each household has its own. Men squatted on the mats around them, impatient for the suppers which their busy women were preparing in the chambers. They were naked, saving the breech-clout, the head-handkerchief, the armlets of white shell, and the long coils of brazen wire on their

wrists; but the close and minute tattooing on their bodies gave the appearance of a dark blue vest. This habit distinguishes the Kayans and Kennowits from the Dyaks, a race superior in all respects.

They gossiped merrily of the day's events, and jested with the girls who moved among them, not too full of household cares for a shrewd exchange of banter. Their eyes, small, prominent, and inky-black, shone in the firelight, and their bracelets glittered. Weapons hung on the posts, ready to each man's hand; spears, swords, shields, blow-pipes. The chief's hearth was largest, and here the elders gravely sat to gather wisdom of the stranger and to impart it. The lobes of their aged ears were so distended that they fell upon the shoulder as a loop of twine falls; one could thrust one's closed hand through the least of them. Overhead were suspended the trophies of their own and their forefathers' prowess, in the form of twenty or thirty skulls, smoke-dried, grinning, distorted from all human shape. Here were my quarters. The fire glowed all night, for the comfort of the old men, and of those relieved by public admiration from toiling in the fields, who never seemed to sleep. I left them droning their old tales and chewing betel; I woke at any hour, and heard the same slow clack of tongues, the same splash of copious expectoration, the same rustling of the siri-box pushed from hand to hand along the mats. Outside, beyond the

eaves, the deep blue night slept tranquilly, the cigales whirred in the black trees, the fronds of the penang drooped like plumes against the lucent sky. And I gave myself to sleep again with awful content and happiness.

Thus the Kennowit told the legend of his charm: "One day," he said, "after the rice harvest, I went to seek gutta-percha in the woods. It is long ago; I was a young man, poor and unconsidered. We Kennowits lived much further up the stream then, for the English rajah had not yet established peace, and, betwixt the Kayans and the Dyaks, we led the life of hunted deer. Even in holiday time our warriors dare not go out, as the custom is, to seek jungle produce. They were brave, they feared no enemy, they had many heads in the pangah. But the women and children were not safe from hour to hour. As for me, I was a single man, in want of a wife; so I took provisions and set out.

"Gutta-trees were common then as bamboos. But on this occasion—it was the strangest thing!—I could not find a trunk. When I climbed a tapong, to overlook the forest, there they stood in dozens; but all vanished at my approach. Some necromancer had bewitched me. I could pick up gutta-leaves quite fresh, torn off by the monkeys or parrots; but there was no tree overhead. And yet all this while my angeï (omen-bird) flew constantly before me on the right hand, uttering three cries.

The grasshoppers were equally propitious. They never sang together, but one at a time, always on the right. I dreamt also of a wife and children, which, as you know, is a sign of extraordinary luck; but still the gutta-trees disappeared before me. So it went on for a week. With such encouragement no one but a fool would have returned, but when I found myself above the rapids, two days' march in the Kayan country, I was frightened.

"It was borne in upon me that an antu dogged my track. I made the figure of an alligator in mud, and stuck it full of bamboo spikes. My bird called 'Trik, trik' all the while I was shaping the image, and I knew that it was pleased. At evening time I got into a tree and waited. Something passed softly underneath, stood an instant, breathing in pain, then dashed through the brushwood. Next day I cut half-a-dozen stout bamboos, and sharpened them so keen that they would pierce a plank of iron-wood. With these I made traps, and set them round about the place. I dared not watch again, but lay far off in the woods, trembling. About midnight the forest suddenly echoed with bellowings and screams. Lightning played round me. The trees clashed their branches. In the blue glare I saw fearful shapes which rushed yelling by me. The marrow withered in my bones, and I turned face downwards to the earth. A hurricane swept through the forest, and lifted me, but I

clung fast to roots and bushes. Then the rain suddenly swelled, and came upon me in a flood ; but I struggled against it, and kept my ground. At length, with a long shriek, the tumult stilled. The antu was dead!"

The effect of this story on a superstitious and imaginative audience was striking. Men, women, and children had drawn close to hear. Their wild eyes burned with excitement, and they pressed one on another till the perspiration gleamed on their naked shoulders. At this moment, in the bush outside, a shrill cry rang out, that of a wild cat springing on its victim. The women screamed, the men struggled towards their arms, and all the serried mass rolled on the floor. I laughed heartily, so did my Malays, so did the Kennowits when they recovered from the scare. But the girls ran away, and were seen no more that night.

"You looked for the antu in the morning?" I asked of the chieftain. "What did you find?"

"An awful thing! Its head was like a panther's with fangs of steel; its body like that of a horse, and its tail a snake; *that* was still alive, and hissed at me. When I struck at it with my parang it broke away from the body and glided off."

"And on the creature's head were those horns?"

"Yes. I brought them home, and everything has prospered with me since. Whilst I cut off the antu's head, my omen-bird called behind me for the first time.

Of course I returned, and everywhere on that same trail, which had not a gutta-tree when I advanced, they grew in clumps. More than that, I found gold, and groves of sago, and I know not what. It employed me weeks to bring my produce to the river, but in all that time no Kayan ever appeared. I became the richest man in our village, and when we moved, after the English rajah's coming, the people chose me for their tuah."

What is one to say of this story? That the old man believed it I could scarcely doubt. Many repetitions had increased its marvel, and had furnished the antu with some attributes which Cuvier would have ridiculed, but a foundation of truth seemed to be discernible. I asked if there were wild cattle in that country and panthers; the chief said that both were common, of a large breed. Thus the bellowing and screams might be accounted for, and a sudden storm would easily produce the other effects upon a man distracted by superstitious fears. The snake's tail, which hissed and escaped, needs no explaining; it gives, indeed, a confirmation to my belief that the tale was substantially true, for all the exaggerations and absurdities which time and fancy had attached to it.

"What will you take for the horns?" I said.

"Nothing on earth would buy them! They hold the prosperity of my village." But I obtained the curiosities at last for a handful of quinine, two bottles of schnaps,

and three empty soda-water bottles—these last a special treasure in the far East.

The other pair of horns unlike the rest, which decorates the bottom of my gun-rack, came to my hands with a story much less romantic. I accompanied the present Rajah Brooke, then Tuan Mudah, on a trip through the outlying districts of this same province. One evening we were invited to a feast, and left the vessel en grande tenue, after an early dinner. Our boat was overladen, I recollect, and it gained the shore but just in time, filling as the last of us sprang out. A mighty uncomfortable adventure it would have been for me, had we sunk in the rapid current of the Batang Lupar. Malays are water-dogs, and to them the ducking would have been a joke. Nor had the officers occasion for alarm, since their boatmen and servants would have carried them ashore without exertion on their part. But a stranger had no claim to such service, and with an unpleasant smile I picture myself drifting down the misty river, hundreds of yards in width, escorted by sharks and alligators on a stream running like a mill-sluice. However, that chance of death was escaped, as had been so many before and so very many since. We slept ashore, and climbed a lofty pole which sloped upwards to the verandah of our hosts. It had notches on either side, foothold enough for a race almost as prehensile with their toes as monkeys. The most of us Europeans were accustomed to go bare-

foot. May it be whispered that his highness himself kicked off his shoes, and swarmed the pole as easily as a bear? He will not be offended at the revelation, for, if the wise man does at Rome as the Romans do, much more in Borneo shall we take lessons from the Dyaks.

Upon the outside verandah we were met by a deputation of high chiefs, wearing their ornaments of gold, and clad in silk. The "house"—Dyak or Kennowit or Kayan—is, in fact, the village, no matter how many souls are reckoned therein. It is divided longitudinally into three parts: the range of sleeping chambers, one to each family; the inner verandah, sheltered by the roof, on which these chambers open; and the outer verandah beyond the eave. This last is devoted to such operations as are objectionable indoors—washing children, cleaning rice, and so on. There is but one floor, of course, which is raised ten to fifty feet above the ground on massive posts. As the population grows, the house is "produced," to use a mathematical term; buildings of a thousand feet in length are not at all uncommon. Festivities take place in the covered verandah, where nothing but the beams, and fire-places easily removed, obstruct any demonstration of uproarious spirit. A great occasion it is when the rajah is invited. The chiefs greeted us warmly but respectfully, and led us to a place of honour. But one chair had been sent ashore, which his highness occupied; the others squatted cross-

legged on the mats, nursing their swords, those who had them. The entertainment was of the usual class, but grander. Warriors danced before us with singular agility, and a display of pantomime quite astonishing. I do not remember, at this moment, any exception to the rule that a power of mimicry is possessed in its highest degree by the races of mankind lowest in civilisation. No actor in my experience—which is wide—can equal the half-human Bushman in this respect. I draw no conclusion from this fact, but it merits notice. The Kennowits are certainly least advanced of those Bornean races which have formed a community—unless, perhaps, the Kayans are inferior. There are, in the East, wood-dwelling representatives of the Bushmen just mentioned, but little is known of them. Such are Ujits, Pakatans, and others, who, if the theory be correct which I confidently put forward, should be the best pantomimists of all. But the Kennowits are certainly more skilful in this art than their neighbours of a higher grade, the Dyaks, who again excel the Malays—Malay humour, indeed, does not so express itself, if I may trust my memory.

A bear-dance was performed for us, a mias-dance, a head-hunting dance, and others, with shrewd appreciation of character and great variety of incident. Then the warriors engaged in mimic fight, and two famous actors represented a jungle tragedy. After stalking each

other a long time, as head-hunters do, they met and fought with sword and shield. Presently one of them fell, and the other clutched him by the hair in triumph, with many gesticulations. Upon the very point of severing the upturned neck, he recognised his brother. The women gave effect to this discovery by uttering a horror-stricken howl; but the victor's expression, gestures, attitudes, were so full of dramatic spirit that I followed the story without need of explanation.

Then, after all the chiefs had danced, and such of the warriors as had a claim to that distinction, the women stood forward. Half-a-dozen hideous old wretches in jacket of blue and tartan petticoat stood one behind the other, and swayed their arms about, with undulations of the hips. They were entitled to respect both for age and rank, but much liquor had been consumed, and the younger men were impatient. They shouted and jeered at those venerable matrons, whilst the girls laughed mockingly. In vain did the chiefs, very drunk, try to quell the uproar. But the dames were not going to be put down by their grandchildren, and they continued the performance, querulously squabbling with one another about figures and "time." The Tuan Mudah himself it was who put a sudden stop to the entertainment. Lit with smoky torches, crammed with naked humanity, the verandah had become insufferable,

and we all longed for our cool quarters on board the "Venus."

His highness asked: "Are there no young women in your village, Orang Kaya? Or can they not dance?" The unruly throng shouted with delight, whilst the wretched harridans collapsed. One burst into tears of spite as she pushed the girls aside—pinching them I'm certain—and escaped. We took the opportunity to go, escorted as far as the edge of the verandah by the most sober of our hosts. Even these could not walk singly, and we should have been smothered under their warm but ill-judged adieus had not the Malays protected us with outstretched rifles. While we smoked a last cheroot on deck the fun ashore grew loud and louder. Several times in the night I awoke, disturbed by a wilder burst of song and merriment. The great house seemed to hang in air, ablaze with ruddy light, which streamed beneath the open eave, and rolled in smoky volume through the apertures of the roof. Dusky figures staggered out, to cool and sleep away their drink in the verandah. The black river was seamed with scarlet threads, reflections of the pandemonium up above. One great shaft of glare crossed the water like a lurid bridge, and faintly outlined the dim trees upon the other bank. The festivities continued day and night, with a loss of several lives by accident or alcoholic apoplexy. When food and drink were all expended, the warriors staggered

home, supported by their female kind, half dead. It is not necessary to compassionate these. They create the mischief, and take pride in their success. I have watched a pretty girl befool a man to drink, with just such ridicule and coaxing as her English sister would employ to gain an end. I have seen her scream with triumphant malice when the poor fellow rolled helpless at her feet, and call her friends to laugh at him. I hoped that she would have to carry that stalwart victim home on her shoulders when the fun was over.

But about the horns. They were tied upon a post just by my seat, with many a tusk and antler, used as clothes-pegs, or hooks to hang weapons upon. When I expressed a wish to have them, a chief cut the lashings and presented me with a miscellanous armful. Few of them were worth preserving, and most of the others were secured in the nets as I have said.

The Dyak shows a pleasant aspect of his character at a netting party. Such an entertainment is offered to officials or guests of rank, and sometimes it is given, after the rice is gathered, for mere sport. Half-a-dozen villages send their stock of nets to the chosen place, commonly a hollow encircled by gentle slopes. The reader knows, of course, that Borneo is all one forest, scarcely specked by the little clearings which bounteously feed a simple population. The nets have a mesh six inches square, and they are loosely but strongly fixed to posts some twelve

feet asunder. Joining one length to the next, the Dyaks carry them across the valley, and so much further on each wing as they will stretch, making a rude semi-circle, whereof the arc may be a quarter of a mile in length or more.

At sunset the warriors go forth, with a joint of bamboo full of rice cooked therein, solid and delicious ; I should like to tell the process were I sure of my culinary science. They file off quietly in detachments through the darkening woods, towards the salt-licks and feeding-grounds where deer assemble. If there be caves in the neighbuurhood they are "stopped" by a few old men. As night settles down, and the noises of the forest cease, low and musical from the distance sounds the belling of a stag. The deer have fed, the does are sleeping, and their lords prepare themselves to combat for the beauty of those soft but unresponsive eyes. On each hill-side around, the challenge is repeated and accepted. No woodland note can he heard more soothing, more grateful, than the "bell" of a wild stag. On a quiet night it rings melodiously till dawn, bucks answering, but not fighting, I think, unless by chance they approach too near. It is difficult to follow the movements of an animal in such dense woods, but the does certainly sleep after feeding, and the bucks would not leave them to seek adventures ; I do not speak of the rutting season.

But, when the Dyaks are about, in two or three hours' time an utter stillness falls upon the jungle. The deer, anxious but not alarmed, slink softly from man's presence. The pigs, routing and grumbling, pause to glare with their little wicked eyes—then gallop through the misty undergrowth with a threatening grunt, a clash of teeth, and an angry twinkling of tails. After such a scurry you will sometimes hear a sound, clear and regular, like that of an axe upon a tree; it is some old boar, furious to be interrupted in the discussion of a favourite root, whetting his tusks against a stump.

By morning the circle is complete, and all day long it presses closer on the frightened game. Presently the guests sally out and take places at each wing of the barrier. If they use firearms it is prudent to keep together, for bullets have a trick, annoying and inexplicable, of dodging through an *abatis* of branches when mischief can be wrought on the other side. We hear a good deal of "Providential escapes," but I could match all in my own experience with "Demoniacal catastrophes." A most startling case of the sort I remember at Addismadi, where an old woman was shot through the back by a ball which had traversed four hundred yards of the closest timber.

When the beaters learn by signal that the sportsmen have reached their places they break silence. Yelling, singing, clashing their swords against the trees, they

start the game and urge it onwards. So large a space is commonly inclosed that the circle could not be guarded by men alone, and a great proportion of the animals would escape. But the clever little Dyak dogs understand this duty as well as any becoming to their sphere of life. If a boar be determined to break through, they cannot stop him, though he will be sore for many days thereafter; but deer they almost invariably turn.

For hours the jungle is clamorous before a head of game appears, but there is this peculiarity about the sport, that the dogs never utter a sound. Gradually, however, the uproar swells, hoarser but more close. The chiefs beside you, quivering with excitement, recognize voices and encourage their favourites in a whisper. Presently the undergrowth in front becomes astir. You may fire if you will, and perhaps a merciful Heaven will grant you a peep of brown fur or grey-black bristles. But, as a rule, the game goes by unseen and unscathed, until a shout, a roar of voices, tell that the foremost buck is entangled in the nets. A very few moments after this signal you may enter the drive and follow.

There is game enough, but not in abundance, in these jungles. Five or six deer and as many pigs are a bag to be remembered, however large the surround—I speak, of course, of parts I visited. In closing on the nets one must be careful of old boars, which cunningly turn

when they see the block ahead, and charge. The dogs, if up, arrest them by sheer weight, hanging to their hind-quarters, but accidents occur, The final *battue* is made with spears, hurled by the yelling savages, amidst such wild tumult and confusion as stir one's own blood to rivalry of noise.

LEGEND THIRD.

SOME SKINS.

I have been looking through the published record of my travels in South Africa to ascertain where I got the lynx-skin which lies before my hearth. This information is contained somewhere in the volume, but I have not patience to find it. Besides, it is only, at best, the name of a place which has no further interest; I like to be accurate, however.

The scene itself dwells complete in my recollection. I was walking with a comrade in the dry bed of a river, just as the sun peeped angrily above the dusty mountains. It gilded the topmost branches of the willows on each lofty bank, and transformed to cloth of gold the grimy wagon-tilts of a Boer party halted on a bluff. Their fires, just lighted, puffed a whirl of azure smoke into the pale-green sky. Big, dingy women, hideous from their mob-caps to their home-made slippers, drowsily washed pots or fractious children. Giant men strode to and fro in the glittering light, muffled to the throat in blankets, carrying a pannikin of coffee. Cows lowed for their Hottentot milkmen, cattle bellowed, sheep bleated, impatient to be led afield.

We, far below, strolled in clear, cool shadow. Upon the crumbling cliffs of mud, wisps of wrack and faded rubbish hung on each projecting clod, twenty feet above us, tide-marks of the last deluge. They were but a few days old, though the sand in which we walked was dry and dusty. In shallow wells, hollowed for the purpose, lay pools of water slowly moving. There, if anywhere in the arid wilderness, would be secured the wherewithal to vary our eternal breakfast of fried mutton chops and dampers—chupatties, tortillas; I forget just now the Africander name for unleavened cakes. Birds flock at morning to the water-holes dug in the night by antelopes and jackals.

But luck was not with us that day. After bagging a few franklin, partridges as they call them over yonder, we walked on until my comrade, who was lame, proposed returning. Just at that moment, a koraun called in a bend of the ravine ahead, and we stalked him cautiously. It was a long shot, when at length he came in view. My friend took careful aim and fired both barrels. Quick as the sound, a fulvous slender creature leaped from behind a rock, and sped away, outstretched like a greyhound. I levelled my gun. But S——, more prudent, thrust it aside, and a puff of dust, a rattle of dry soil tumbling, marked where the shots had struck, yards wide.

"You must restrain this impetuosity on the veldt,"

he said, laughing. "Unless you had killed the lynx, which is improbable, seeing that your gun was loaded with small shot, he would certainly have attacked us; and a wounded lynx is an ugly customer, let me tell you —none more so of our smaller animals, excepting a rattel."

It was annoying, but my experienced friend was right. After securing the koraun, we turned, and in the homeward walk he gave me several anecdotes displaying the courage and ferocity of the lynx. I think I noted one or two of them, but worn old memoranda are troublesome to read, and the tales are not particularly striking. "You do not mean," I said, "that the funny little long-nosed rattel is as dangerous as this savage creature?"

"You will find that sportsmen here don't often meddle with the rattel. For one reason, he is comical, as you say; then, he is no use dead, and rather serviceable alive. But his safety is as often due to a man's natural disinclination of interfering with an animal which has such an awkward way of fighting, and staggers to the charge with half his weight of lead inside him. I once killed a rattel; it's many years ago, but I have never recovered the full use of my feet.

"It was the first time I had a shot-gun. My father was with me, but in returning home he stayed to chat with a friend. I saw the rattel creeping round an ant-

heap. He cantered off, not very fast, and I fired at an easy range. The brute turned heels over head, just as they do for hours at a time when they are playing; if you have seen rattels in a cage, you must have been amused by their performance. But it was no fun this time. He came back. I had no second barrel and no knife. It was awkward. The creature paused once, as if in pain, but never took his eyes off me. I did not think of running, but clubbed my gun, and stood, prepared to meet a spring. It was the oddest chance that no one had ever told me how the rattel fights. Almost every boy in the veldt knows it, but I didn't. To wait thus, expecting a leap breast-high, is to give him exactly the chance he wants. Hesitating not a second, the beast glided swiftly in, and seized my feet. I hacked him with the butt-end, kicked at him, shouted my loudest, but he gnawed with the pertinacity of a bull-dog. At every blow his teeth closed like a vice. I seized his long tail, wrenched and twisted it, but the rattel will not quit hold if he be cut in pieces. Not a moment I suppose the struggle lasted. The muscles of my instep were cut through, and I tumbled backwards—not full length, but against the ant-hill. That saved my life, probably. The brute let go, as it does when its victim drops, to spring upon his throat, and rip his stomach with his hind claws. But I lifted myself upon my elbows, and lay across the summit of the mound. That

might only have prolonged the struggle, but my father ran up at the moment. I was many months in bed, and many more on crutches."

I do not remember to have seen this habit of the rattel described.

When the Boers heard that a lynx was in their neighbourhood they were mightily disturbed, and they sent out Hottentots to track it. No animal of its size is so destructive to lambs. A few days afterwards I received the spoil, which, mounted on skins of Central Asian foxes, is much admired in my drawing-room. These fox-skins, be it noted in passing, I bought at Simla for one rupee apiece; and I was badly cheated as prices go there. Mr. Poland, the furrier, of Oxford Street, was so obliging as to explain how the Tartar dyes, or the manner of using them, produce results beyond our competition. These savages are particularly successful in their treatment of fox-skin.

Some weeks or months after getting the lynx, I accompanied the late Mr. Lilienfelt, of Hopetown, on a ride through some property he possessed beyond the Hoek, the junction of the Vaal and Orange rivers. Amongst other interesting experiences of that tour was a visit to a Basuto Kaffir kraal. There is no telling what the Zulus will prove to be when their shrewd wits, high courage, and enterprising disposition are turned to peaceful objects. They may well show themselves as

superior in their arts as in war. But for the present the Basuto is by far the most advanced of South African natives. Athletic, bold, industrious in his way, and emancipated in some degree from superstitious dependence on his chief, he pushes further and further into the territory of his neighbours. Little colonies have fixed themselves amongst Gaikas and Galekas on one side, amongst Batlapins and Barolongs, Corannas, and Griquas on the other. They commonly live in good intelligence with their hosts; if not they hold their own by arms.

John Katland, my worthy friend, was chief of a community like this, dwelling across the Orange. How he had drifted on to Mr. Lilienfelt's property he did not seem to know, but there his people sat, amidst well-cultivated fields of maize and Kaffir corn, yams, chilis, tomatoes, vegetables, and fruit. They had scores of horses, hundreds of oxen, thousands of sheep, bought, in the main, by sale of diamonds honestly acquired. Somewhere in this district was found the Star of South Africa. Our Basuto squatters had no such luck as that, but their quick eyes often discovered gems without specially seeking them. We saw a handsome waggon and twelve span of oxen bought with the proceeds of one diamond; the happy finder turned it up in digging the shallow foundation of his hut. And the flocks of sheep similarly acquired, the watches and guns, were freely indicated

when Mr. Lilienfelt assured the Kaffirs that no royalty would be asked.

This little Basutoland is not more engaging than any other districts in its vicinity. I am not qualified to speak of South Africa as a whole, because I saw but a small portion of that enormous country, and the Eastern provinces, Natal and Kaffraria, are said to be much more picturesque. My experience is limited to the veldt lands betwixt Capetown and Pniel, seven hundred miles of the dreariest, dustiest, least interesting scenery in all the world, to be described as habitable. In what is called "pasture," each blade of grass springs at some inches distance from its neighbour. To a stranger's eye there is very small difference between desert and fertile ground; what distinction he observes is all to the advantage of the former. Glorious flowers there are in both, though short-lived, but the desert has most in number as in beauty.

There is not what may be called a tree for scores of miles, excepting, very rarely, the avenue of an old-established and luxurious colonist. Only on the hills or in the kloofs, the defiles, springs a bush. The land rolls in gentle undulations, too soft, too uniform of tint to break the appearance of dead level. The mountains which everywhere intersect it are barriers of sandstone,—abrupt, inaccessible, even at summit as at base. Beautiful effects of shadow, smoke-blue, and light, orange-pink, one sees upon the crags at morn and evening, but the veldt rests

unchanged, grey-green, banded sometimes with stripes of yellow weed. Its only incident is the shadow of a passing bird, high-poised in air on gilded pinions, or the whirl of a sandstorm. Then, in truth, if the tempest obscure the crimson radiance of sunset, one beholds a scene unparalleled on earth. Hell itself seems to have broken bars, and flames horrible to the zenith. But even this spectacle, if thrilling, is not pleasant, and the veldt of South Africa must be pronounced, upon the whole, to be the least engaging landscape occupied by man.

We have heard a very great deal lately of Kaffir barbarism, dirt, indolence, and so on. I hold no brief for any savage, but I am prepared to argue that for cleanliness and comfort the ways of Basuto life put to shame the habits of our own labouring classes. Dwellings better fitted for the climate European ingenuity could not invent. Round in shape, heavily thatched, abundantly furnished with skins, which alone divide the inner space, suspended from the radiating beams, they are dark and cool in summer, warm in the shrewd winter chills. A six-foot fence surrounds the hut, and its close wattling excludes the neighbours' curiosity. In this yard, so to call it, every domestic operation which entails a smell or mess is carried on. The Basuto will not even cook indoors. His floor of powdered ants' nests is watered every day, and swept with brooms which score the moist earth in patterns

fanciful but regular. Vermin have no chance of existence there. The inmates, men, women, and children, wear little clothing, but the flesh they display in guileless unconsciousness is clean and smooth as brown satin. Pretty faces are by no means uncommon in a Basuto village, and perfect figures are a rule with the young of either sex.

John Katland proved to be a smiling stalwart fellow, with a broad determined face. Our visit surprised him in the act of mending some complicated machine of sticks and strings designed to catch rock-rabbits, the dossie, whereof the excreta forms a valuable export from the Cape. He wore a superb kaross of silver-jackal skins, for the sun was not yet warm. Slipping this cloak from his left shoulder, just as the negroes of the West Coast signify respect, he led us in. Mr. Lilienfelt began to talk of grazing-rights and diamonds, water-claims and diamonds, diamonds and labour at the Fields. The chief spoke English very well, and the conversation had abundant interest, but that kaross fascinated me. The skins, some thirty or more, were perfectly matched, and scraped to the softness of a glove. Not knowing what price would tempt a man who owned such thriving crops and such large herds, I said to one of the Kaffirs who had thronged to see us:

"Where did the chief collect such a fine lot of jackals? It must have taken him a long time."

"Yes," he answered, laughing; "but John Katland he got all kaross one night."

This seemed to promise a story, and the hero himself related it after a time. He was present at the breaking of the dam above Victoria, an event which has seldom been equalled in the colony for dramatic horror. The chief was returning from Beaufort. To that distant market he had carried a quantity of peltries, mostly otter. Regular "Kaffir traders" will buy none but the rarest skins, unless they get them monstrously cheap, and Katland knew a better trick of business. Beaufort is the outfitting place for the small traders or large pedlars, who track about the veldt, dealing at the lonely farms and hamlets. They exchange their goods, as a rule, for sheep or wool. Many of the animals are lost in driving them about, and many others reach the market sickly and exhausted. Katland bartered his otter-skins for a large flock of these invalids, and leisurely commenced his homeward march. Such a speculation entails just that sort of work which Kaffirs cheerfully perform, and Europeans dislike. It demands above all things vigilance, for the jackals gather from every side, smelling the weakly lambs, and accompany the drove to the utmost confines of their district, where another pack as eager and as pertinacious replaces those which fall off. In protecting their flock Kaffirs will undergo much real hardship without a murmur.

The neighbourhood of Victoria was rather famous for the enterprising spirit of its jackals. Two years later I myself was dogged by them in a long night-march in a way ludicrous but not quite comfortable. Katland outspanned above the kloof, and prepared for extra watchfulness. He had with him sturdy youths, who could generally be trusted to keep awake during their sentry. But there had been a wedding in the village, and a ball was given that night.

It was the 27th of February, 1870. The Basutos became excited at the sounds of festivity which reached their ears, borne on the wind. The chief himself yielded to this temptation, and he clambered down to observe the white man feast. All his boys off duty slipped after him unseen, and they had equal luck in returning, two or three hours later. But the mischief was done. They had found liquor down below, and when their turn came to relieve the watchers they could not keep awake. Stealthily and swiftly a dozen bold jackals crept within the line. The sheep burst into simultaneous outcry, and ran together, but a number of them had been cut off. These broke away, baaing with fright, all the pack of jackals after them, pattering down the kloof. John Katland leaped from his rug, but it was too late. As he stood on the brink of the declivity, the snarling and swearing of the animals faintly rose from the depths of that black gorge, mingled with the strains of music.

Suddenly a roar as of thunder—the cliff beneath him shook. In a second the kloof was well nigh full of tearing, bellowing, raging water. All Victoria down below had been twinkling with lights, exposed for this joyful occasion. Before Katland could draw his breath one-half of them went out, one-half of the village was swept away amidst a din so awful that the cry of a drowning population rose unheard. The great dam had burst, eaten through by land-crabs.

A terrible night was that for the survivors. They were only those, old people mostly, who had left the ball-room, or had not gone. Nearly all the youth of Victoria had perished. A glance showed the extent of the disaster, for the lights still shone cheerfully in every house standing, but their rays fell broken upon shapeless wreck and hurrying water. In the morning, bride and bridegroom were found, locked in each other's arms. The dead lay scattered for miles down the channel of the flood. It had all now passed, leaving but a trickle through the slime and slush and ruin.

Katland took no share in the research for corpses, but he also was hunting for lost property, and vengeance. At one bend of the defile six of his mangled lambs were found, and thirteen silver jackals; in all, he secured fifty-one skins of the latter, and nineteen of the gold variety, besides wool and hides of oxen more than he could carry. It was not theft. The mourning inha-

bitants of Victoria would have let them all rot. So, for the loss of fifteen sickly sheep, Katland obtained some scores of hides, hundreds of fleeces, and the kaross which I admired. He sold it to me for three pounds.

I made another visit to the Hoek some while after. A country boy, who has been pent for years in the grimiest city slum, may feel, on some too brief holiday, what we diggers experienced, leaving the burnt-up, treeless, colourless fields for a glimpse of running water and fresh foliage such as lies in a narrow strip along the Vaal and Orange. The river scenery of Griqualand is no marvel. For a hundred yards on either bank are trees—that is all. Neither there nor anywhere may one lie upon the turf and smell the fresh perfume of an English field. One laboured through white sand, ankle-deep, and the only flowers at that time of year were flaring stars of misembryanthemum and yellow tendrils of cassia. But there were big green trees, and twittering birds in flocks, and bees, and gurgling water.

The Hoek also offered clean beds, various foods, and a pleasant welcome. I liked the solitary spot. It amused me to sit and watch the travellers arriving from parts savage and mysterious, to hail the ferry-boat. Kaffirs they were generally, or Griquas, treking with their herds and waggons full of produce to the Fields. It amused me to see the diggers, bloodshot of eye, travel-stained,

imperious, with shirt-sleeve rolled to the shoulder, and scarred from the wrist up with boils, inflamed by poisonous dust. The pick and spade, the pannikin at waist, and butcher's knife behind, marked them for "prospectors."

At Mr. G——'s store they purchased flour and biltongue for their adventurous journey, with some chops for a present meal, which they prepared forthwith at a fire of sticks. That store was also an agreeable lounge. Upon its shelves, hanging from its roof, depending from its walls, was found every article of semi-savage commerce. The imports were less varied, but more interesting. Those big chests on which one sat would scarcely close for their wealth of ostrich feathers, neatly sorted out and labelled, from the "prime first bloods" through a long catalogue of classes to the humble "duster." Some were filled with skins, of the more valuable sorts, otters, lynxes, maned lions, leopards of superior marking; the lynx-skin is supposed, by blacks and whites alike, to guarantee the wearer against rheumatism. In the safest of his drawers, Mr. G—— had a pretty show of diamonds, bought from John Katland's people and others dwelling across the river; of sapphires and rubies, too, unless he was mistaken, which I fear he was. At this shop, over this counter, Swartzboy offered the "star" for two hundred pounds. In Mr. G——'s absence his assistant dared not risk such a sum. So

Swartzboy carried his treasure on and sold it to Niekirk for four hundred pounds, half cash half goods. The same night, Messrs. Lilienfelt bought it for twelve thousand pounds, and now the Countess of Dudley wears it.

One evening, as I fished in the shade beside the landing-place, a horseman on the further side halloaed for the "pont." A person not obliging naturally learns to help a fellow-creature in the wilderness, where he himself so often is dependent upon others: the diggings are not a bad school in some respects. I raised my voice, shouting for Louis, and presently that athletic individual knocked out his pipe, emptied his glass, and replied. Meantime, three waggons heaved rumbling to the shore, pulled through the sand by a dozen bullocks each. One by one they were ferried across, and several horses, thin and melancholy, followed with their master. I had recognised his business at a glance. The panels of the largest waggon were decorated with pictures of lions, elephants, bushmen, and Heaven knows what, executed in the roughest style, and horribly defaced by weather.

We strolled to the house, and Mr. G--— recognised my new acquaintance with effusion. He was a young Dutchman, from Holland, who had struck rather an unusual path in the Kaffir trade. Finding the eastern and northern "circuits" overdone, he resolved to try Namaqualand, a country which is called the Great

Desert, by supremacy over the Karroo and the Gouph. Desert in South Africa means a country unsuited to sheep. Namaqualand is inhabited solely by Bushmen or by broken clans of Bechuanas, variously called, who have sunk almost to the Bushman level. It abounds with game—for the Cape desert is quite a peculiar region—but there are not inhabitants enough to collect the hides and skins and feathers, even if they had been sufficiently advanced to comprehend trade. This young fellow employed himself in forming a "connection," and he had been not unsuccessful on the whole, during several years of trading.

Upon this occasion, however, ill-luck pursued him from the first. The season was exceptionally dry, and exceptionally pestilential for animals, as it was throughout the colony. After an absence of only four months, he had returned despairing. No less than seventeen horses had been left to die or recover under care of native chiefs, and the mortality of his oxen was terrible; the former he would regain, on payment, at his next journey, if alive. For weeks at a time, man and beast had found nothing to drink besides the sap of roasted melons, and very little to eat. Nor was this all. For several years of drought had thinned the game, especially the valuable kinds. Ostriches had mostly run off to happier pastures, and those which remained were poor and sickly. One would not have believed that the trip,

after all, had been so disastrous, observing the enormous quantity of fur and feathers which the trader produced next day for Mr. G——'s valuation. But there are many profits to be paid before an ostrich feather or a lion's skin reaches its ultimate possessor, and I doubt not that our enterprising friend told the truth. He would scarcely have returned with half a cargo had the prospect not been bad.

Amongst the tumbled heap of skins were the *spolia opima* of three maneless lions, especially large and well-preserved. I asked Mr. G—— to buy them for me, and he obtained them at a pound apiece. After supper Mrs. G—— inquired laughingly for the souvenirs which had been promised her. "Dear madam," said the hunter, in his pleasant old-fashioned English, "I will tell you the truth. When I killed the lions which Mr. B—— has been kind enough to purchase, I said in my heart here are goods which Mrs. G—— will value, for her friend won them with his own hand. She has furs and feathers better than I bring from Namaqualand. Those skins I will give her! But misfortunes overtook me. I am poor, and in debt. When this gentleman offers me three pounds, after a short combat I say to myself, 'Mrs. G—— will be kind as usual, and patient. She will let me search for another something to please her.' Is it not so?"

"I must show myself worthy of your good opinion,"

laughed our hostess. "But don't kill any more lions for me. It is a kind of sport in which the lion brings off a souvenir almost as often as the man."

"Oh, no! I ran no danger at all, and I will tell you how it was.

"You know that I have sought the Bushman's poison for years. Often they promised to show it me, how it was made, but they ever cheated. Some cooked one thing, some cooked another, but always it was the wrong thing. You will know that I had paid much cash for these futile humbugs, and my patience failed—one does not like to be mocked by Bushmen. At length the head-chief of the Damaras told me something. He said: 'It is truth that very few of us know how to make the poison, for it is sgundru (fetish). First of all you must find a tchisgundra (obi man). I, even I, do not know the secret. Any man may bruise puff-adders' heads, but the poison is not there.' So I despaired, for the obi man does not dwell where the trader goes.

"But this last year in the desert has been terrible, as I have had the honour to explain. The poor Bush folks could scarcely keep their souls alive, and they treked to all parts seeking water and game. The obi man does not move. He has his dwelling by a spring, where nobody comes unless for business; but the springs were all dry. One time I was making a long stretch from one melon bed to another. In the heat of the afternoon,

when my poor horse lolled a dry tongue six inches from his jaws, we met an ugly man, painted and shrivelled. He had been lying in the bush, but on seeing us he rose and came forward tottering. My Bush boys cried out and went behind the waggon. The poor wretch caught my knee in either hand, pointed to his mouth, all dry and bleeding, and fell. Melons ready roasted were in the waggon, and I gave him to drink. 'Another,' he cried huskily, 'another!' His life was saved. 'Show me the Bushman's poison,' I said, and he answered 'Yes.' 'Swear it by your fetish!' and he swore. So I gave him melons, and carried him to the halting-place.

"After a few days, for he had left all his things at home, he made me poison. We went together for the purpose of gathering what plants and materials are used. I do not know everything by name, but I can find and mix them. Besides the plants there is a lizard, several snakes, and large quantities of a small hairy caterpillar which feeds upon the camel-thorn. All is there, in my waggon, and I despatch the parcel to Leyden for analysis.

"The stuff was cooked, but because I had often been deceived I had no faith. We came near the Lake Ngani, where there are lions. I said to the obi man, 'See now! We will take a bow, and we will wait for wild beasts by the fley. If your poison is not good, and I die, these Kaffirs, who fear not your charms,

will slice you into bits.' He answered, 'Good,' and we set out at dusk."

"What a foolish wicked thing to do," cried Mrs. G——. "Hunt lions with one of those little Bushmen's bows! You might as well shoot a pop-gun against elephants."

"Indeed, the Bushmen are not so silly as you might think, dear madam. They rely not upon their arrows, but upon their venom, and see how crafty is their way of hunting. If the bow were strong to hurl its shaft with force, the lion would be very angry, and would rend the hunter before he died. They use a little weak bow, a little arrow, and they shoot delicately. The wild beast roars and bounds with pain, but his wound is no more than skin deep. He tears out the slender reed, looks about him, roars again, and drinks quietly, for he believes that a thorn has pricked him. In three or four minutes the poison begins to work. The lion has forgot that incident. He walks away, then falls, and fights, and dies, his enemy standing a few yards off unnoticed. There is another thing also, madam. The poison does not keep long. Then there is much fraud amongst those who manufacture it, and a poor man is seldom sure that it will produce the due effect. On these accounts also he would not anger the lion with a great blow. Oh, the Bushman is clever, I assure you!"

"But you don't know how to shoot an arrow!"

"Pardon me! I went with the obi man to the fley, and presently the animals arrived. One, two, three, I shot, and they died quietly. The obi man took out their hearts, their livers, and their galls. I said to him, 'What will you make of them?'

"'The hearts,' he answered, 'I shall dry, and those who eat that medicine will have courage like the lion. The liver and the brain will give me long life, health, and wisdom for myself. The galls will make poison for the enemies, which I shall sell.'

"I left the old sorcerer at the fley, mixing his charms. Believe me, dear madam, you shall have a dozen lion-skins when I return from my next journey."

LEGEND FOURTH.

A HELMET.

Where the religious fervour of a nation has fixed one central spot as holiest, the painter and philosopher will find material enough for study. It is said that a "revival" is impressive, though enthusiasm must needs be strong to shine through our snub English features, and master the impediment of our ugly English dress. That spectacle I have never seen, but it was granted me to watch a Mexican crowd, in an agony of fear, wailing its penitence and its prayers for mercy. Those who have beheld will not forget that sobbing throng which circulates about the shrine in Peter's house upon the Neva, dim in the smoke of incense, red in the light of innumerable candles, crying out, gesticulating, fainting in the crush and heat. But for picturesque effect, complete all round, daily worship in the Golden Temple at Amritsur will be hardly matched. One can only guess, no stranger has beheld, what it might be in seasons of danger to the faith. He who has seen the tearful excitement, heard the impassioned words, and marked the zeal of these simple manly folk in times of quietude,

will be first to admit that imagination cannot form even an outline of that picture.

The Sikhs, they say, are declining in numbers and religious spirit. It may be so, and doubtless it is, since those best qualified to judge, and least anxious to have the truth revealed, declare the fact. The gooroos, or priests, lately petitioned the Viceroy, on his visiting their temple, to enforce the ancient laws. They complained that the children brought to them for initiation, or whatever the ceremony may be called, are yearly diminishing in number, though the Sikhs, as a people, are certainly increasing fast. The Viceroy, of course, regretted that he could not arrest the threatened extinction of a faith which is as nearly perfect, in theory and in practice, as idolatry can be. But the outward tokens of decay are not yet visible. The Khalsa and the Grunt, the Sword and the Book, will last out our generation. Fresh layers of gold-leaf are daily added to the glittering temple walls. The costly pavement is repaired with marbles yet costlier. Faded frescoes are repainted, dimmed mirrors replaced. Before the draperies of cloth of gold or silken needle-work are soiled, others more gorgeous are strewn above the holy books. Pious offerings pour in unceasingly; the population, young and old, pass their afternoons in listening to the preacher—in Amritsur at least. The marble causeway bears a double swarm of devotees, going and returning; the

marble tank is lined with zealous bathers. Perhaps the Sikh faith is dying; but what life remains is ecstatic.

The Golden Temple reminds one somewhat of St. Isaac's at St. Petersburg. Each building has a central dome, with turrets open and pillared like baldachins at each corner. But the Sikh temple is strangely flat and low, and resemblance ceases below the roof. It is all gold outside, from the apex of its dome to its marble pavement. An open cloister surrounds it, however, and the heavy dazzling ornament of the exterior is not carried through. The cloister, and the fane which it conceals, are built of white marble, inlaid with the most valuable stones, in pietra dura. Under the friction of countless worshippers who pass and repass, crushed against the wall, these jewelled panels get defaced, and it is a work of merit to restore them to their pristine beauty. The cost varies. A Sikh gentleman inquired for me, and he learned that one just finished had cost sixty thousand rupees—say, five thousand pounds. There are certainly not less than five hundred of these panels.

The temple stands upon a platform of marble in a great square tank of marble, which again is surrounded by marble balustrades, and a broad sunk pavement of marble, to which we descend by a marble staircase. Everything is holy inside the iron gates which close this golden paradise. Boots must be removed before setting foot in it, and Lord Lytton has not earned forgiveness

for his attempts to disregard this sacred law by a present of one thousand rupees; leather is a substance peculiarly repugnant to the feelings of every Hindoo. A very handsome causeway, marble of course, opening beneath an arch all glorious with gold, leads to the island temple. It is lined with beggars, fakirs, and pilgrims, who await a charitable inspector of the faithful. So do the huge fish, mouldy and blind, which lie with their ugly mouths agape beneath the balustrade. Those who have imagination strong enough may picture to themselves the many-coloured throng of worshippers who stream towards the island, or return, from sunrise to sunset; nay, for anything I know, from sunset to sunrise. Never did I see a pause.

The temple itself is small. Passing from the cloister through low silver doors, exquisitely carved, embossed, and chased, of which the value alleged is fabulous, one enters a square apartment scarce twenty feet across; an open colonnade runs round the small central space—the holy of holies—where lies the Grunt, the Sikh revelation. In this colonnade the faithful wait their turn to adore the sacred book, moving in a ceaseless stream. Thick white mats carpet the sanctuary, whereon, cross-legged, squats a blessed orchestra, with flutes and odd stringed instruments that wail and scream a music not unfitting to the scene. So tiny is the area within the columns, that the flowing robes of the performers cover it up,

excepting a few feet down the middle and the space at one end required for the officiating priest. Wherever the mats are visible they are strewn with costly shawls, silk, cloth-of-gold, embroidery of most superb design and tint. Heaps of grain and cowries, piles of copper coin, lie amongst these, tossed anyhow together, and they fall rattling as the players move their stiff limbs uneasily. The Grunt itself is inclosed in a large box, the glory of which I cannot describe, for it is hidden beneath a load of shawls, the most beautiful that human fancy can conceive or human patience execute. Over all these, trailing down the mats and tumbled by the shifting movements of the priest, is a great pall of silver tissue, which shimmers in the half-light. Overhead hangs the low dome, crimson and silver, gleaming with bits of looking-glass disposed in mathematical patterns. From the gallery above the colonnade, dark faces framed in brilliant turbans look down upon the sanctuary.

The priest kneels beside the Grunt, and stretches out his hands above the sacred chest containing it. While the orchestra plays a wild accompaniment, he ceaselessly intones a hymn, and his open palms travel to and fro like machinery, the left dropping money in a box beside him, the right giving flowers in exchange from a tray on the other side. The impatient and perfunctory manner of this priest contrasts with the hysteric fervour of the devotees. They sing, they cry aloud, gesticulate and

faint, over the blossoms of the mogri, so carelessly distributed, but the throng urges them fast towards the opposite door. If there be any scene so strange and thrilling in the world I have not beheld it. Religious enthusiasm, always an impressive sight, is nowhere environed by circumstances so delightful to the eye. The softened light, the rich colours of the dome, the gorgeous draperies, the spotless robes, the golden skins and perfect features of the girls, the majestic beauty of the men, form a picture such as no description could exaggerate. I mounted to the gallery above, and watched till I was almost dizzy with the shifting blaze of tints, the scream of music and the shrill intoning, the murmur of the people, the heat, and the sharp close smell.

Amritsur is a place interesting, I daresay, for many objects besides its Golden Temple, but I recollect only that supreme delight, and the trivial incident connected with my helmet. Strolling about the town, I was led to a shop rather famous for Cashmere goods—this is a great market for such articles. After beholding a thousand shawls or so—in earnest truth, the merchant would not suffer me to leave until a mass eighteen inches thick had accumulated round him—I bought a couple and departed. In the yard we met a boy, carrying some heavy object in a scarlet cotton rag. My servant spoke with him, and presently asked, "You want buy Indian man's head thing, sah'b?" Before I

could demand an explanation, the child undid his bundle, and displayed a beautiful helmet, of the old Sikh form, familiar to most people. It might be described as a bowl-shaped cap of polished steel, fitted with three long plume-sockets, one at the crown, and one above each brow. A heart-shaped piece of metal, at the end of a stout shaft, protects the nose; playing through a loop, which is fitted with a catch, it may be drawn up and secured when no danger threatens. All round the cap-brim depends a curtain of chain-mail, short over the eyes, but long enough behind to guard the shoulders and the back. In this specimen, the nose-piece, the plume-sockets, and an inch-wide circlet round the brim, were finely inlaid with gold, whilst the curtain was adorned with golden links disposed in an effective pattern. I asked the boy how much he wanted for this very graceful piece of armour, expecting he would name a heavy price. "A hundred and fifty rupees," said he, and within five minutes I secured it for one hundred, say, eight pounds ten shillings, to my great astonishment.

A lady dined with us that night who, to many charms of mind and person, adds a singular shrewdness in the ways of native cunning. I displayed my shawls, not without emotion, for they were very beautiful and they had cost me dear. The lady examined them with critical eye, and thrust her delicate finger through the

embroidery. While I looked on speechless, she repeated this cruel operation here and there, until, with a burst of laughter, silvery I admit, but painful to my feelings, she cried: "Dear Mr. B. your shawls are centuries old; most exquisite specimens for the British Museum, but too venerable for earthly ladies' wear."

I was so angry, I am so angry still, that if I could recollect the name of that hoary patriarch who swindled me I would publish it here. It is a consolation to think that his nefarious dealings with the guileless and the trusting were widely advertised by indignant friends; but I chance to know that he does a large business with England direct. Those whom evil fate delivers to his hands may be pitied. More than a month elapsed before I could recover my rupees, though the old scoundrel knew he must pay, sooner or later.

The jokes that followed this incident I bore stoutly, conscious of a trump in hand. The helmet was produced.

"There, Mrs. R." I exclaimed with confidence, "poke your finger or your fun through that!"

It was passed round with great admiration. But my excellent friend R. surveyed it closely and gravely, with puckered brows. "Why," said he, "unless I greatly mistake, this is one of the things stolen from the Runjeet Singh armoury at Lahore. How did you get it?"

"As a jest," I observed with dignity, "your idea

does not bear comparison with Mrs. R.'s happy thought. Boy, give that sah'b a 'peg' to brighten his wits. If no one has a remark more amusing to suggest about my helmet I will pack it up."

"Upon my honour, I am not joking," said R. "The armoury was robbed some months ago, and I believe this is one of the objects stolen. You needn't be alarmed; nobody will tell; but I shouldn't wear that article much, if I were you, about the streets of Lahore."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. R. "What a picture fancy conjures up! Mr. B. publicly recognised by his helmet as the destined Gooroo, acclaimed by the populace, adored by the Khalsa, leading victorious armies, and seating himself upon the renovated throne of Runjeet Singh! Oh, what would become of *us?* Do not, do not be persuaded, dear Mr. B., to wear your helmet *much* in the streets of Lahore."

My unfortunate purchases had let me in for a supper of "chaff." Accepting the desperate situation I replied, "In the consideration of your selfish interests you forget a higher question. Is the headdress becoming? If so, in a great statesman's immortal phrase, 'Perish India,' so long as I look nice."

I put it on; he and she put it on; they all put it on; and everybody agreed that everybody else had never looked so pretty or so imposing, as the case might be. Man and woman, young and old, this superb headpiece

fitted them all, and made them appear—the men grand the women enchanting. Since coming home I have tried it on subjects very unpromising, but it has never failed to beautify. Spectacles cannot destroy the martial effect; a false front, and all that delusion entails, do not impair the magic charm. When Mrs. R. put it on (I may say so here, some thousands of miles beyond reach of a jealous husband) she looked so divinely beautiful the old Athenians would have worshipped her as an incarnation of Pallas.

Returning to Lahore, I visited the armoury from which, as I was assured in confidence, my trophy was stolen. Little remains of the palace built by Runjeet Singh, as of the palace of the Moghul emperors at Delhi; but I am willing to believe, in either case, that the parts best worth saving are preserved. The grand walls of the citadel stand erect at Lahore, and the fine gates, painted so incongruously with fantastic beasts and unnatural flowers. All through North India one seems to mark a struggle. Supreme taste and grandeur of architecture are injured by trivial tawdryness of decoration. History explains this anomaly. The taste is that of the conquering Moslem, the offence that of the Hindoo spirit asserting itself where it can. The long mastery of the Afghans in the Punjaub had used its people to the forms, the light and airy elegance, of that architecture which, modified but not degraded, is at root Saracenic. Run-

jeet Singh shared the feeling of his subjects. He did not conceive, probably he could not have found men to execute, another style of building, but he could and did show his nationality in the question of ornament. The walls are simple and majestic; the gates, though full of odd fancies, sudden quaint variations, have the graceful proportion of Afghan work. But Runjeet Singh has daubed them with pictures like those outside a travelling managerie.

So far as I know, the other parts remaining of the palace-fortress are the Durbar Hall, with its adjoining chambers, and the exquisite summer-house. It will be understood that I describe from memory alone. Matters not more important in history, but much more pressing at the time, occupied my too brief visit to India. Without notes or references it is quite possible that I should commit an error here and there in details. No more than a rough sketch is intended.

At Delhi, at Agra, one's capacity of holding and retaining lovely visions is flooded. A certain impatience at the languor of our slow senses fills the mind; realised there in stone are dreams which have been shadowy and shapeless, too beautiful, too strange, to be admitted even in sleep. No monument in all the world, unless it be the Alhambra, compares for sensuous delight with the Durbar Hall at Delhi; for magnificence, solid and imposing, with Akbar's palace at Agra; for absolute per-

fection, with the Taj Mahall. The Delhi architect knew the merit of his work, and proclaimed it. In every corner of the hall he wrote, in characters of gold, "If there be paradise on earth, it is here, it is here!" From my soul I pity those who cavil at the artist's boast. Paradise, say these, or would say if they could express their inarticulate ideas, is not made of barley-sugar, coloured sweetmeats, and looking-glass. Paradise is mystic, solemn; an abode through eternity of strong and pious souls, not of luxurious fays. If you tempt these critics to explain themselves more fully, you will see how in their heart of hearts they imagine that the soul, whatever its nationality while incarnate, becomes true British after death. But the paradise of Delhi is not even European. It is like nothing they ever saw, or could have fancied; it is, in truth, sunshine and colour petrified, and, because our happy land is not familiar with sunshine, whilst our habits forbid us colour, the average Briton cannot see those blessed gifts of the Creator. That the eye sees only what it looks for is an axiom in art. When a commonplace observer stands before a tablet in the palace wall, and marks its exquisite inlaying, as careful in the minutest point as in the mass of flowers,—when he surveys the marble screens, carved into lace, admitting a soft radiance which is to light as moonbeams to sunshine,—he is astonished and delighted. But it presently comes home to him that these lovely

things are not pictures, but the very wall itself, that every gap is filled with marble guipure, delicate as a Chinese fan; and he revolts. As bric-à-brac, as bits to display under a glass case in the drawing-room, these things are charming. But a grand edifice all built of such is a monstrous idea. Where are the broken lines, the "cloud-capped towers," which make our European notion of great architecture? Where are the shadows, the unexpected changes, the upstairs and downstairs, and the general disarrangement which we are used to call "picturesque"? Nowhere.

Another class of critics take a loftier view. They say: this is beautiful workmanship, unsurpassed for delicacy of feeling, a world's wonder of its sort. But how far below the chastity, the dignified composure of that early style which suggested this school of taste. We might almost credit that the supreme genius who designed the Taj Mahall—he may have been an Italian, permeated with the spirit of the beautiful life around him, or he may have been a Persian, an Afghan, or a Hindoo, as different legends state—whoever he was we might almost believe that he had a prescient thought of such criticism when he did this work. Three or four miles from Delhi stands the tomb of Sufter Jung, the vizier of Ahmed Shah, a building of red sandstone, which charms the eye of all who see it, cognoscenti or heretic, officer of Engineers or Tommy Atkins, English-

man or native. This monument is a reduction of the Taj, stone for stone, barring the minarets, in such material as the courtier could afford; the price was two hundred thousand pounds any way. Being in red sandstone, it has effects of shadow; uninlaid, it has simplicity, which the glory of Agra was not designed to have. An exact reproduction, nevertheless. And observe that this is enthusiastically admired, in their innocence, by people who declare the Taj, for all its beauty, to be low art. What is the conclusion to be drawn? That the detractors' real objection is not against the building but against the material, to which he is unused; against the snow-white colour and pale blue shadows, which seem unnatural to his eye.

The Hindoo population had no cause to love its Moslem masters. Facts are established, not by tradition nor by history alone, but by published laws, which prove such incredible and fantastic tyranny as the world has seldom shuddered at. The two millions sterling—or was it twelve?—I forget—which this building cost, were dragged with blood and tears from the subject people. But the Hindoo has forgotten all that in his astonishment and delight. We do not know much of Mumtaz Mahall, for whose sepulchre Shah Jehan raised the Taj. No incident relating to her dwells in my mind, save the tradition that she used to come daily, whilst the monument was rising, and play hide-and-seek with her ladies

there. The gorgeous halls around the central dome were filled at that time with slabs of unworked marble, and here the court-dames had a thousand frolics. Nur Jahan, the Indian Helen, was a leading personage in her day, whose intrigues and ambitions caused a million deaths, and moved the destiny of empires. Volumes have been written on her doings, whilst all we learn of Mumtaz is that she made a playground of her tomb. But Nur Jahan is forgotten of the people, who worship the spirit of the Taj. I myself have watched the crowd of peasants carrying flowers to her vault and making adoration. These poor folk recognise a dwelling such as their own goddesses might inhabit. Its silver splendour appeals to them, children of the light. Its soft and sensuous lines express that ideal which rests latent in their hearts.

I could rave by the hour of these glorious works, but they lie far from Lahore and its armoury. In the Sikh capital are no such wonders of the world. What palace buildings remain there are comparatively simple in taste. The summer-house, truly, a delicious vision in white marble, silver, and glass, would not be out of place at Delhi. But the Durbar Hall is more sober. The martial ruler of the Sikhs did not expend his substance in pietra dura at four shillings the inch. He had things handsome about him, not extravagant. Paint and stucco, gilding and silver, reproduced, near enough, the same effects which the Moghul sovereigns gained by costly marbles

and intolerable expense. Such as the palace is, cheap by comparison, no monarch in the world has a dwelling more delightful. When the floor was strewed with Persian carpets, and the superb hangings were rolled back upon their pillars; when the open sunny hall was filled with chiefs and counsellors in gayest silks, reflected by a thousand bits of mirror in the painted ceiling and the silver walls; when the Sikh chivalry paraded in the court beneath their monarch's eye—those who witnessed that scene beheld the last grand show of martial pomp as it used to be, the last grand spectacle of old world magnificence. There are rajahs yet in India—too many—who keep their ragamuffin armies and clothe themselves in jewels as in mail; but the spirit of the thing has gone, the glory has departed. Their regiments are maintained not for fight, but for show, and all know it. Gorgeous to spare are their durbars, but the reproving eye of the "Resident Sah'b," like the trail of the serpent, is over them all, checking their too lively moods, baulking their display of royal will and temper, rebuking, or if need be forbidding, their pretty pastimes. The glory of India departed on that fatal day when the little Maharajah of the Sikhs resigned his throne—a glory which, though the philanthropist and the economist may shudder, is mourned by the painter and the poet. Lahore is still delightful, with its busy crowds draped in every hue under the sky, its beautiful women and majestic men;

but, as the Roman peasants sang to Byron, "Non e piu come era primo."

It consoles the curious mind to notice that Runjeet Singh grew weary of his state. Outside the palace, up rickety steps, they show the study where he loved to sit with little Dhuleep, now a county magnate in this dull realm of England. Six people could not stand in the tiny room, which is plain almost as a barrack lodging. The walls, of polished plaster, are daubed with roses, and lillies, and daffydown-dillies, in the style of those pictures at the gate. Conspicuous on a pilaster, a mere "bogus" thing, are the portraits of Punjab Lim, his favourite son, who died, and young Dhuleep. Horribly bad they are as works of art, and equally bad as portraits. The warrior monarch is identified by his snowy beard, and his one eye; but there is scarcely an effort to give individuality. Dhuleep is represented as a chubby boy, with eyes as large as saucers, and lashes curling into the distance. But it is recorded that the artist more than satisfied his employer. Runjeet sat for hours every day, the loving child upon his lap, regarding with complaisance his absurd caricature. He was thinking doubtless of the future, how to provide for the safety of his heir amidst a factious nobility, how to ensure a continuance of that friendship with the English which he had eagerly embraced and loyally sustained. In prophetic moods he knew the endeavour hopeless, but his

sagacity could never have foreseen a particle of the truth. Runjeet would have smiled without anger at the maniac who announced that his son would be a Norfolk landlord, employing his spare time in the composition of an opera. What troubles would have been spared us had the old lion survived to hand the succession over to a heir grown up. What is done is done, and our forefathers had apparently no choice but to annex the Punjaub empire. A pity, nevertheless. The Russian bear, and the Pathan snow-tiger, would have broken their teeth in the Khyber Pass.

A collection of weapons most curious and interesting is that in the armoury of Lahore. An artist's eye observes with pleasure the strange shapes, the fantastic but tasteful ornaments; and the mechanician also finds matter for his notice. The efforts of native craftsmen to imitate European arms are curious in themselves, and creditable to the ingenuity of the makers. Lots of odd things are pointed out: a revolving carbine, which, it might be thought, would need two men to carry it and one to make it revolve; chain-shot of extraordinary combination; fac-similes of English breast-plates, as if the Sikh were not handsomer and better; thumbscrews; complicated lances; odd flags and standards; swords of endless variety and shape; wall-pieces, matchlocks, firearms of every sort and kind, with machinery undreamt of in Europe since mediæval times; the famous wagnakh,

wherewith Sivaji murdered Afzul Khan, which might be described as an Indian form of knuckleduster—an instrument carried in the hand, furnished with three tremendous claws of steel, with which a man disembowels his enemy while embracing him; daggers of eccentric fashion, &c. But the most interesting display is that of armour: helmets, breast, back, and side pieces, gauntlets, and shields. All of these are as artistic of decoration as admirable in design and material. The greater part are inlaid with gold, like the helmet I have described, some more, some less; but I did not see many to surpass my own. The friend with me, who knew the secret, maliciously observed to an intelligent soldier who ciceroned us: "You have a good many valuables here, and no great precautions against robbery. Is nothing ever lost?"

"Why, Sir," replied the man, "they did use to think that the armoury would be safe without a guard at all. There's thieves amongst the Sikhs, though not a many; but they told our officers, the gooroos did, that the worst badmash in town would starve before he'd steal old Runjeet's things. And we ain't a big garrison in the citadel now, and duty comes a little bit heavy sometimes. So, in the last sickly season, our officers took off the sentries, thinking that them as mounts guard over the palace opposite could keep an eye upon the armoury; and the first dark night, what happens? Why, some

badmashes comes in and puckarows a coolie-load of all the beautifullest things in the shop! It was hard on me, for I was corporal of the guard that night; but our C. O., he's a gentleman. For he doesn't say nothing much, but comes out as soon as it gets dark, and stands where our chaps had been doing sentry-go, and he sees for himself that we couldn't have spotted them thieves not if there'd been a regiment of them, unless they marched with bands playing, which they weren't likely to do, were they? So it passed over, but the things have never been recovered. All the same, I should like to catch one of them chaps as did it. I'd let him sabey what it is to be in a funk, as we was. I would that!"

Though I didn't take the helmet, I felt guilty. Is it my duty to return the thing? Any one who has time to resolve a case of conscience may address me under care of the publisher. I am too busy for such inquiries myself.

LEGEND FIFTH.

A STOOL.

I observe that when young ladies deign to accompany papa on a visit to my bachelor abode they specially affect a certain stool beside my drawing-room fire. This piece of furniture has, indeed, a singular attraction for the young of that sex which I admire so warmly and know so little. Old ladies seldom look at it; men lay their feet on it without a glance, scarcely exclaiming, after a long séance, "What a queer seat! Where did you pick it up?" But girls instinctively appropriate my stool, and in the hollow of its upturned wings they settle themselves cosily. Then they exclaim to papa that he must get a thing like it, and asked where such a funny, dear, delightful object is to be procured. When I tell them it was made in Coomassie, they look blank. To remind them of the Ashanti war confuses but does not enlighten. The West Coast is a geographical formula, without significance. Most of us who went through that campaign are not yet used to regard ourselves as old. But, my bachelor friends of that period—so many, yet so reduced!—the pretty girls of this year of grace

have forgotten your prowess, your hardships, your perilous adventures. With so many other things breathlessly studied and ardently loved when mademoiselle wore her hair down her back and her skirts at her knees, they have slipped from memory. Other heroes she has now, not bodiless imaginings begotten out of fancy by the special correspondent's pen, but real live gallants, fresh from Zululand or Afghanistan, who tell their own experiences vivâ voce, if they find no subject more absorbing. Ulundi and Rorke's Drift, Jellalabad, the Peiwar, and Khelat-i-Ghilzai, these are words known by heart, whilst Amoaful and Coomassie recall but a vague tradition.

My stool rests upon a square, flat base, whence rises a hollow column, perforated à jour, to support the top. This is eighteen inches long by ten inches broad, ornamented with holes neatly cut, and curved upwards at each end like a bow. It is all one solid piece of cottonwood, that stately tree found in the tropics of both hemispheres. The timber is too soft for our purposes, but this very quality adapts it to the use of the patient but unlaborious negro. With such implements as his, a lifetime might be spent in shaping and carving a block like this of any harder wood, and it might probably split when finished. The ceiba cuts much more easily than deal, and has an exquisite whiteness. It will last, if kept within doors, from generation to generation, its pristine

spotlessness maintained by scraping the surface with rough leaves; but the sun has a disastrous effect.

The Ashanti has but one model for shape, though his varieties of decoration are many. Those who have seen the pretty stool which Sir Garnet presented to the Princess of Wales can exactly picture mine, save the graceful carving and the *repoussé* work in silver; that is to say, my trophy once resembled that historic article. It is some generations since, however, for the surface is yellow and almost polished, and the symmetrical perforations have been knocked one into another. At some distant time a corner has been split off, and re-joined by stitches of copper-wire, astonishingly neat. I would not have it supposed that my stool is other than a handsome article of furniture, but by comparison it is very dilapidated. How it chanced that I brought such an ancient relic from Coomassie, when there were hundreds new and beautiful about the place, is just the legend I am going to set down.

On the night of the capture I dined with the little mess of gunners. We were five, I think—Captain Raite, Lieutenants Saunders, Knox, and Palmer, and myself, in a small hovel off the market-place. Our equipage was of the simplest and the roughest; our fare Australian beef, shredded out and mixed with rice. During the brief meal the head executioner of Ashanti paid us a visit, and immediately afterwards a summons came to

aid in protecting the place against our camp-followers. It was busy in the streets that night. Barricades had been erected at the chief opening of the town, and their defenders slept heavily beneath them. At every turning blazed an enormous fire, the biggest of all before the general's quarters; it lit the open alcove of the building where Sir Garnet and his staff wrote, smoked, dictated, gave orders, and drank tea in public sight above the throng. Soldiers, hurriedly re-equipped, pressed towards the burning quarter, whence rolled dense clouds of smoke and sheets of flame across the inky sky. The glare shone through and through the tent; the tramp of patrols going out; the fierce discontent of those wearily returning; the complaint of plunderers dragged to justice; and, above all, the wailings of a policeman sentenced to be hung, distracted me for awhile. But one sleeps sound after a victory.

I had engaged myself overnight to accompany Saunders in a thorough exploration of the town. After coffee at daybreak we visited the aristocratic quarter destroyed by our Kroomen and camp-followers the night before. Many curious and valuable things remained in that labyrinth of neat huts and small courtyards leading one into another. The heavy thatched roofs which made such a blaze had mostly fallen without grave damage to the building. Thence we entered the palace and surveyed that extraordinary show of barbaric wealth and

barbarous cruelty. Enough has been said of its contents, from the renowned umbrella and the golden pipes to the range of stools coated an inch thick with human blood as with glue. But to the last day of my existence I shall regret those tables of carved ebony, one adorned with plaques of gold, one with alternate plaques of gold and silver. I had carriers returning empty-handed who might have borne them away with a quantity of treasures which were blown up and burnt.

Two hours in the palace carried us to breakfast-time and duty. In the afternoon we strolled another way, beyond the inner line of pickets. Here also the streets were broad and smooth, lined with houses much bigger, and, in many cases, even more elaborate of decoration on the outside. One after another we entered them, traversed their empty courts, and examined their forsaken chambers. In this quarter, scarcely touched by plunderers, everything remained as the owner left it on his hasty flight. Cloths and silks lay on the floor, arms and skins and what not hung upon the walls, sacks of clothing, brass lamps and basins, chairs, beads, and ornaments were strewn around. Often were we tempted by some quaint and interesting object, and the strife against temptation forbade us to show mercy when we caught two Fantees looting. These scoundrels had chosen a house very large and highly ornamental; its outer wall bore the representation of a battle in stucco, highly polished, and

stained with Venetian red. They knew the likely hiding-places, which we did not; and a curious assortment of valuables they had brought together. A large bag was filled with native silks, worth, as it afterwards proved, some sixty pounds at the coast. Upon the floor lay sandals, adorned with little lumps of gold, weighing probably an ounce apiece. A Brummagem musket was cased in silver, and a pouch-belt of leopard-skin, fitted with silver-handled knives, priming-flask, and fetish-bag, lay beside it.

But the article of loot which dwells especially in my recollection was a pile of stools, all snowy white and beautifully carved. Whether the owner had arranged them in such neat order, or the Fantee plunderers, we did not ascertain. They were five or six in number, and the two lowest had silver mountings, nearly as handsome as that given to the Princess of Wales. Leaving all this wealth, we led our prisoners to the provost-marshal, whose dealings with them I never learned.

In the night my tent was flooded by a deluge of rain, and I crept miserably into a hammock, whence nothing could stir me till the last instant. By seven o'clock the main body of our troops had started on its homeward march, and the rear-guard stood waiting for the destruction of the palace. I resolved to bring away one silver stool at least for a trophy, and ran towards the house mentioned, Yarbro, my head servant, after me. The

Kroomen stood at every corner, with torch in one hand, matches in the other. A superior officer called after me as I passed, and reluctantly I commissioned my stupid "boy" to find and bring in the loot. Yarbro seemed to comprehend, and set off at score, for the distance was not trifling. In a quarter of an hour he returned, with one handsome white stool, not silver-bound, and the ancient piece of furniture I have described. In great anger and disappointment I flung the things at him. But a dull boom, a rush of smoke above the trees, told us that the palace was destroyed. "Fall in, there! Fall in!" officers cried. Gleeful at a chance of mischief, the Kroomen lit their torches, and rushed up the street, firing the thatch wherever it was dry. I picked up my stools and threw them into a hammock.

I do not distinctly remember meeting poor Saunders after this. His case was of the saddest in the sad record of that war. Returning to England with a brevet majority, he went home to enjoy a rest well earned. Few men escaped as he did whilst on campaign, but within three weeks the dreaded fever seized and killed him. It is not becoming in me, or is this a fitting place, to write of private sentiments. Grief that fatal war caused me, as so many more. But the death of Saunders, not in the field, not even in the sick-ward, but at home, his honours won, his safety sure, was bitterest.

At the first camp I asked Yarbro why he had not

brought me a silver-mounted stool, and why he had mocked me with such a rubbishing old thing as that I sat on. He replied, first, that he had found no silver-mounted article; and second, that he thought the rubbishing old thing was what I wanted.

"Why—why—why?" I cried with increasing rage. But Yarbro's English, not strong at any time, vanished before a sign of anger. His eyes rolled timorously, and words came without connection. I made out that the stool was a great fetish, worth incalculable amounts in luck, if not redeemable for money. Nothing further could be gathered, and I dismissed him with resignation. At Cape Coast Castle he entered my bedroom one morning, and hung about as a man does who wants to talk. On my questioning him, he answered, "Ashanti man come. He want trade, Sir." I was pleased to hear this, for nobody had expected that the beaten enemy would so soon recover from his sulks. But the matter did not interest one who is not so fortunate as to be connected with any kind of trade. I said as much, and left Yarbro to his household duties. At her appearance in the breakfast-room, my kind hostess eagerly addressed me:——

"Did you understand what Yarbro meant, Mr. B——? He says that two Ashantis brought a quantity of gold dust to exchange for your old stool, and that you refused their offer."

"Gold-dust for my old stool? Oh, this deception is worse than the first! Pray send for him."

Yarbro came, and volubly declared in Fantee that such and no other was the message he had given me. It was no time to correct misunderstandings. "Fly!" I cried; "catch them Ashanti one time!" But he was too late. The messengers had gone back disappointed, fearful to linger amongst that hostile population. Very mad I was when all hope vanished, but I could scarcely blame Yarbro. He, it appears, recognised the house to which I sent him, perceived the grand fetish in a corner, and doubted not that I wished to have it. The visit of the Ashantis did not surprise him, nor did my refusal. The omniscient white man doubtless understood what he was doing, and scorned to exchange his luck for money.

When all hope of catching the delegates was lost, I asked Mrs. —— what the incident signified. "That I cannot tell exactly," she replied. "Your stool belonged to Quoi Afrim, the favourite general of Sai Tooti, who founded the Ashanti kingdom."

"Ah, the venerable object does not look as if it was made yesterday! And what did Quoi Afrim do with it?"

"There you ask too much of my folk-lore. His name is familiar on the coast, and I have heard it since I was a child. We will ask Yarbro if you like."

It was the sultry hour of the afternoon, when people suffering from liver go to sleep. I said, "By all means!" and my luckless follower arrived. Standing before us in the verandah, he told his legend, and the lady translated it with spirit. Of course, the Fantee had no dates, and very little geography. I could correct him at the time, but my African learning is all forgotten, nor have I books for reference. So far as memory serves, the events narrated took place about 1720 A.D., in the country of the Akims. But I guarantee no more than the simplest facts.

The Ashantis were slaves of Denkera, a kingdom which they have reduced to a geographical expression. So utterly oppressed and broken were they that the brutal monarch exercised on them his maddest freaks of tyranny, such as he did not dare impose on other tributaries. As I understand it, the Ashantis had never been independent at this time, and they were scarcely a nation. Sai Tooti, the destined hero, was son of an evil-minded caboceer, who in a small way retaliated on his people the miseries and insults he himself suffered from the men of Denkera. Father and son did not agree at all. Sai Tooti employed himself in hunting with his friend, Quoi Afrim, the heir of a chieftain who lived near by. In his house Sai Tooti passed the time not occupied in the jungle, saving a rare visit to his mother, for whom he had a passionate affection. Quoi Afrim

had a sister, with whom his friend naturally fell in love. I do not know whether the feeling was mutual, or whether it was even declared. But one day the wicked caboceer perceived that he had room for another wife, and he cast his eyes upon this girl, unknowing, one may believe, that his son fancied her. The young men came from hunting to find the marriage festivities in progress. It was too late to interfere, if interference would have availed, and they fled with their sorrow to the woods. Some months afterwards the Gesler of Denkera imagined that crowning atrocity which cost him his life, gave his kingdom to Sai Tooti, and launched the Ashanti people on that career which we stopped for awhile, but did not block. He ordered that every caboceer should surrender his first wife to soldiers despatched for the collection of this new tribute. The affection of mother and son is always powerful with negroes, and I have mentioned that Sai Tooti had an extreme tenderness for his parent. He heard the news in the bush, and hastened home, not yet with any thoughts of a resistance, which seemed hopeless, but resolved to save his mother by stratagem. The only chance of escape lay in persuading the caboceer to sacrifice his new bride, and this was but one degree less cruel to the lover's feelings. But the uxorious old man refused, and whilst the argument was warmest the soldiers of Denkera arrived. They numbered six, and their conduct probably was offensive. Father and son

had already come almost to blows, when the wailing of women in the court roused Sai Tooti to ungovernable passion. He rushed out, followed by his friend, and attacked the Denkerans. The old caboceer and others took their part, whilst a number of villagers joined their assailants. In the end the soldiers were all slain, and the chief among them; but the founder of Coomassie was never charged with parricide.

This incident caused the rising of the Ashantis, wherein Sai Tooti naturally took the lead. Denkera was overthrown and enslaved. It rose to semi-independence afterwards, till the finding of that grand nugget, which Lord Gifford so narrowly missed taking, caused its annihilation—for the King would not give it up, nor could keep it, and so he was swept away.

There is no doubt that Sai Tooti, like the Zulu Chaka, was a master-man. He transformed the people of serfs, whose name was a byword for cowardice and degradation; led them, unused to arms and the practice of war, from victory to victory; and before his thirtieth birthday had established an empire that stretched from the Kong Mountains to the Prah, and from Dahomey to Mandingo land.

Touching the fate of his early love, history is silent, but Quoi Afrim was his sovereign's right hand. After years of fighting, always victorious, defeat came, and death with it. The Ashanti monarch invaded Akim,

fought a successful battle, and received submission from the chiefs. They bound themselves by the most solemn oaths to be his liegemen, to serve him in war, and to pay tribute. Sai Tooti, who was ill, accepted these terms, and, after a time, went forward to new conquests. But the treacherous Akims perceived that the victor, ever confident, travelled an hour's march behind the army, with an escort of two thousand men. The booty to be gained was enormous, the risk of failure slight. It might reasonably be expected that an empire so hastily created and so incongruous would drop to pieces at the overthrow of its founder. The Akims resolved to hazard a bold stroke, and they assembled secretly in the woods behind the ford of Cormantin—a spot unvisited as yet by Europeans, so far as I know, but not to be confused with the town of that name on the sea-shore. It lies upon the Bossum Prah.

Everything went as the conspirators desired. The main army crossed without suspicion, and after a while the body-guard came up. There were as many slaves as fighting men in that gorgeous retinue. Sai Tooti himself, with a hundred women, travelled in silken litters plated with gold. Every great caboceer had his harem. The advance-guard crossed the river, and then, at a signal given, the Akim chiefs in attendance suddenly escaped. Forthwith, an overpowering number of the enemy attacked the long line in silence. From either

side they rushed, sprang out of holes, dropped from the trees. Skilled marksmen transfixed the horn-blowers, and snatched away the instrument which might have given an alarm. The vanguard re-plunged into the stream, but never gained the hither bank. Those in rear, dashing forward to protect their king, entangled themselves among screaming women, litters overturned, and slaves escaping. But a circle formed about the monarch, and here the fight was desperate as hopeless. Quoi Afrim saw that all was lost unless help came. His sons were the fleetest of the army, and they stood behind him. At a word the three youths fought their passage through the struggling crowd and fell upon the enemy. Two gained the bank; one only gained the other slope, with the Akims behind him. While the devoted guard fought breast to breast with the enemy, this boy ran for his king's life and his father's. Wounded, fainting, he sped through the trees. At length a little group of stragglers appeared ahead, and then only did he raise his voice. "Turn, men of Ashanti! Your king is waylaid!" They ran back, and he flew on. The footsore and the sick regained their strength, and as they turned the cry rang forward: "Our king is waylaid! Help!" From mouth to mouth it passed like the wind. The track filled with soldiers hurrying madly to the rescue. Shouting his desperate news, the youth struggled through them, until he saw the umbrellas of the chiefs command-

ing the vanguard borne towards him. Then he knew the alarm was given and set off back. The host returned in one solid body, without order or array. It surged along the path, burst through the river lined with foes, and cut a passage to the fatal spot. The foremost saw Quoi Afrim still upright, surrounded by a crowd of enemies. Whilst they looked, he fell upon the body of his dead master, saved at least from insult. His son bent over him: "If you die," he cried, "your stool shall be yearly washed in the blood of a hundred Akim slaves for ever!"—as is the custom.

The hero whispered: "Not mine! Give all to the king!" and so died. Thus it happens that Quoi Afrim's stool was not plastered with the blood of generations, like those others which we saw in Coomassie.

The fight was long and desperate. In the end the Akims retired with vast plunder, and the Ashantis withdrew to their own country. The flower of the nobility had perished. But the spirit of Sai Tooti survived, and the massacre of that day was awfully revenged. It has not been forgotten, however. Meminda Cormantin, Cormantin Saturday, is still the strongest and most fatal oath by which an Ashanti swears. If a man broke that the earth would quake. When the slave or the prisoner is seized, and the knife is at his throat, if he can but shriek those syllables, he is preserved. For this reason it is that the Ashanti's first action is to thrust a knife

through the victim's jaws, paralysing or tranfixing his tongue.

That is the legend attached to my stool. I presented the white and handsome one to Mr. Mayer of Liverpool for his renowned collection.

LEGEND SIXTH.

AN OLD LETTER.

In rummaging the drawers of my bungalow, I find deposits long forgotten, faded memoranda, dusty "cuttings," old bills and letters, and odd scraps put aside years since for reference, and overlooked. Moments occur to every man who writes, when all the powers of his brain will not furnish one idea for the article expected of him day by day. When that happens to me, I waste no time in useless quest, but go forthwith to overturn a drawer. In following this practice the other day, I came across a little packet of letters and newspaper extracts, labelled "Mutiny of Kanodwingue." Name and story had vanished from my recollection; probably they had never reached the hearing of the public. But, as I studied the notes thus preserved, I thought they contained a legend worth recording. In date it is very modern, but the state of things displayed therein has passed away.

Early in the spring of 1878 South African newspapers contained many fragmentary notices and remarks about a desperate fray at Kanodwingue, where an unmarried

Zulu regiment was said to have been annihilated. After a time appeared reports by survivors, and shocked protests from missionaries, against the vengeful doings of Cetchwayo. The matter interested me. It had, as told thus brokenly, a vague and fanciful depth of horror which roused curiosity. And I have been concerned with the Zulus ever since I made slight acquaintance with them, ten years ago. I wrote to a friend, whom I will call Elliot, dwelling on the frontier, to tell me what he knew. His answer was so long in coming that I received it only on my return from India. But I could not have found a better source of information, as the reader will perceive. His brief statement of facts has worked itself into a narrative, but nothing is added to the historic details.

Elliot's address was the Post Office, Newcastle, and he lived at a farm called Zuurfontein (Sour spring), somewhere on the Buffalo. That stream alone divided him from Cetchwayo's territory, and for months he had been watching the frontier with anxious gaze. For Kreli and Sandilli were "out" at that time; Dukwana and Gongobela were suspected. Doubt who would, Elliot knew well that Gaika and Galeka messengers slipped by his farm, panting and mudstained, on their way to the "drift" at night. And he saw the answering couriers who travelled by day, as becomes the servants of a potent arbiter. These were chiefs in general, but of

such poor class as did not disdain the shelter of his Kaffir huts, whence they expelled the lawful occupants. Sometimes, indeed, they came to the house, behaving in a lordly fashion; but Elliot knew how to deal with them, and felt no great alarm as yet. Not to such emissaries would the Zulu king entrust a serious negotiation. But from day to day, from one drunken bout to the next, the monarch's policy might change.

On January 3rd my friend climbed the *kopje* by his house, as usual, and looked across the river. Emerging from the shade of lofty banks, and trees in summer leaf, the current broke itself in glittering swirls amongst a labyrinth of rocks. This was the "drift," which steamed in the morning sun, sultry, though but fifteen minutes old. All was quiet in the pastures of coarse grass. Mounted Hottentots were driving the cattle out with many a yell. For some weeks past, Elliot had been sending his herds away; his business was stock-raising, and the certainty of grass and water had drawn him to these wild parts. Near three-quarters of the drove had been already dispatched, but a hundred head remained—of which the greater part were to *trek* southwards that same day.

Upon the Zulu side the river things looked peaceful also, but the view was much more broken. Between slopes clothed in golden cassia and tufted grass deep *sluits* wound towards the river. Half filled they were with thorny shrubs, offering cover for a thousand

savages. At some three or four miles distance showed the edge of the bush, a dark line running betwixt grey-green *veldt* and purple, misty hills. League beyond league it seemed to stretch, over rise and valley, its low brown bushes forming a prickly tangle to be entered only by the naked Kaffir. But here also, Elliot's practised eye saw no suspicious sign, and he was turning to descend. Suddenly, at a point in the bush where it made an angle—far distant from the path—a single figure stepped into the tall grass, then others, then scores. Elliot shouted his Hottentots to bring in the cattle, and rushed homewards down the hill.

He had been prepared for such a chance. All the Boer farms round had been visited by Zulu marauders, and some of them burned. His own escape had been due as yet to personal influence and popularity, strengthened by the liking which these people have for the English race. Against small bodies Elliot had fortified his house, and he felt reasonably confident of holding it, at the expense of his cattle and outside property. But, if these invaders should prove to be acting by the King's command, it would be madness to resist. In that case, however, his life was quite secure. A Zulu prince commanding an invasion would not massacre in cold blood. Servants and black people generally might be shot or assegaied, but it would only be in sport.

When the oxen had been kraaled again, Hottentots

armed and stationed, the swift-footed Zulus had reached the drift. They plunged in at once, grasping each other's arms. Observing them closely as they landed, Elliot remarked the wearied, hurried gait, the eager talk, and frequent glance behind of persons in danger. Refugees from the caprice or justice of the Zulu king were commonly enough encountered on the border, but such travelled secretly by night. For the pursuers were never far in rear, and no help might be expected from human kind, white or black. The settlers of the boundary dared not, if they would, protect disobedient subjects. Chivalry might have enjoined such a course, but the farmer makes no claim to chivalry. If he did, the display might be noble, but it would be uncommonly brief. I am inclined to think that five minutes' indulgence of the grandest sentiment would be real prodigality at the cost of life. The utmost that a man of sense could do, under the circumstances, when he met a Zulu fugitive, was to shut his eyes hard, and drop any eatables he might have upon the saddle. So much sympathy as this was not shown without risk.

But these refugees were not of the common type—neither old men, nor disgraced chiefs abandoned by their tribe, nor women. There might be two hundred of them, all very young, and evidently soldiers. Their shields had been lost, and a few were quite unarmed; many had their limbs bandaged. The foremost to ap-

proach was a youth of magnificent stature, whose features, not uncomely, showed a stubborn spirit. He wore silver bracelets, kaross of leopard skin, and handsome ornaments about his person. The bands of a shield, with some splinters of wood attached, hung on his left arm, which was terribly swollen;—as though the shield itself had been torn away piecemeal in a desperate fight. Close behind this youth followed an elderly servant, the only greybeard there, who carried a breech-loading gun. Elliot suspected the truth at once, on scrutinising the style and appearance of his visitors. They belonged to some "crack regiment" of bachelors, and they had fallen into a military scrape. A horrible death was probably in pursuit.

Reassured, Elliot advanced to meet the little crowd, shaking hands with a few who claimed that honour. The common men threw themselves upon the ground utterly broken. After greetings of ceremony, Elliot asked, "What news, *izmdana?*" The young chief seemed pleased that his military rank should be recognised at once, but he said, "Our news is bad; give my young men to eat, and let them sleep in the shade." There was no disputing the command of an officer with two hundred desperate men behind him. Elliot ordered two oxen to be killed, while some of his Hottentots packed the few things remaining in the house, and others drove the cattle southward. Whatever the crime

of these youths, he who aided their escape would share their doom; and Elliot knew he must fly. He led the chief and his immediate followers inside, where they slept upon the floor whilst food was preparing. Two hours afterwards the wagon had rolled lumbering away, his horse stood saddled at the door, and he roused his guests to eat. They started from sleep like hunted men, and fell upon the rations of tough beef. The rest and the food restored their strength, and when Elliot, shaking hands, prepared to ride away, they cried, "You are our father, and we will go with you to the settlements!"

"My horse is fast," objected Elliot, who foresaw that his family would consume two oxen a day or more.

"We will wait for him!" said the young chief disdainfully.

"I have very far to go!"

"Not so far but that the king's *impi* will overtake you," observed the gun-bearer, a man of cunning looks.

This was very true, and besides there was no choice. If the Zulus wished they would catch and pass the oxen before nightfall, and better have them friends than enemies. Leaving a few chosen runners to report, the band fell in and marched at a step so quick that the horse, a fast walker, could scarcely keep pace. Some

few miles out, they overtook the wagon, and the company divided, half going ahead, half behind. Swift-footed flankers climbed every slope, to scan the back trail. Presently the cattle were overtaken, fresh oxen inspanned, and the march continued. By nightfall the river lay twenty miles behind, and no news of pursuit had reached them. Strong guards were judiciously posted, and after supper the weary Zulus fell asleep as they lay. But so long as Elliot kept awake the chief crouched before the fire, staring at the blaze, and drinking, I am sorry to add, whole tumblers of raw "smoke," which affected him no more than so much Gladstone claret. Seeing the youth so wakeful, Elliot asked the name of his regiment and its offence.

"My regiment," he answered sadly, not looking from the fire, "was the Imgobamakosi, which they called the Young Undi. We fought the Ikehla, the married men, at Kanodwingue, and many wives are widows. But here you see all that are left of the Imgobamakosi."

"What was the quarrel?" asked Elliot.

"My heart is sore, father," answered the chief, impatiently. "I am the cause of this disaster, and the spirits are rending me."

Elliot thought it not unnatural that spirits so freely imbibed should produce uncomfortable results of one sort or another. But he respected the poor savage's grief, and went to bed in the wagon. Next day, before

sunrise, the scouts came in from the river, announcing all quiet. "The Ikehla," said the chief, with a savage distortion of his features, "love to catch cattle, and murder women, and burn. They don't care to follow young men!" After choosing other runners to watch at the camp vacated, the party set out, and by changing oxen frequently Elliot managed to cover twenty-five miles that day; but another such march would have ruined his herd. Twenty-four hours' start, however, and forty miles' distance, relieved his anxiety, whilst every step brought him nearer the Colonial border. The Zulus would hesitate to cross it in arms.

The fugitives were not tired that night. They made great fires of thorns, and talked quite gaily. A very few had tobacco, which they smoked through holes in the ground until the coughing brought up blood, and they rolled over stupified, as the Kaffir practice is. Growing quite curious to know the history of the fight, Elliot drew the councillor aside by the temptation of a bottle, which in a few moments loosed his tongue.

"My master," he said, "is Nanasayo, an *izmdana* of the Young Undi. His grandfather was a great chief; Chaka loved him, and called him Lion. His father was a great chief, and served Dingaan; he it was who struck the first blow at Weenan, where the Amazulu washed themselves in Dutch blood. Dingaan loved him, and called him Lion; therefore he would not give a hand to

Panda for Dingaan's death. Simrakasi was this great chief called, and his names are still cried when the fight is hottest. For he did not oppose Panda, though he would not strike. Accordingly, he lived rich and honoured, but on his death Panda sent Cetchwayo, who murdered every son of Simrakasi, carried off the women, and ate up his tribe. This boy, my master, was very little, and one of his sisters hid him. He was carried with her to the royal kraal, and brought up among the women. Cetchwayo knew who he was, but said nothing, for the sister was his favourite slave. When he grew old enough, the king enlisted him in the Imgobamakosi. But he never liked the boy, and though he has fought bravely, so that the regiment swears by his name for a great oath, no wife was given him when he had passed the age. Many grey-headed chiefs, the friends of his father, interceded; but Cetchwayo is obstinate. Nanasayo did not seem to mind. He was always bright and cheerful, ready for the king's command. His company danced more gracefully and more terribly than any other of the Young Undi. So it was with my master until six weeks ago, when the Umkosi approached." This great national festival finished on December 29th, as Elliot knew. Upon the last day of the fête the king was used to announce any new law which his *indunas* had sanctioned, and distribute the girls arrived at marriageable years.

"I know Nanasayo's secrets," continued the councillor

cunningly, as his bottle grew low. "For his first wife he desired a daughter of Cetchwayo's, Lansula by name; and what did it matter if permission was refused him to marry some other girl? He had been brought up with the princess; but she had now reached an age to marry, though in appearance like a child, small and round and slender. Nanasayo longed to know whether the king meant to give her away at the Umkosi. He could not eat nor sleep as we marched to the royal kraal. Had I not seen him in battle, I might have doubted if he was his father's son. So I asked the old women if Lansula was to be married with the rest, and presently they told me that she was granted to prince Umhao. That news, I thought, would daunt my master, as it must, had not the girl bewitched him; for who is he to contend with Umhao? But, when I told him, he spoke foolish words. And then came the fight. Our regiment was destroyed, and your lordship wants to sleep."

Elliot did not, but the *induna* did, badly. He had finished the bottle, and his words came slow and more confused until they ceased. Next day the scouts again reported no alarm, and Elliot proceeded by easy journeys to the colony, his Zulus following. Every night the young chief sat moodily drinking before the fire; and every night, before the councillor got drunk, he talked of his adventures. So Elliot gained the facts which I am weaving into a narrative.

Lansula was a pretty girl, no doubt; amongst the Zulus such are plenty; and, possibly enough, she was fond of her old playfellow. But marriage with a prince, the commander-in-chief—that is a weight to counterbalance much affection. No cares nor responsibilities would fall upon Umhao's youngest wife. She would sit on precious furs all day, chewing snuff, whilst slave girls combed her long wool into strange devices. What chance has love against such high delights, especially when the course of ambition and vanity is also that enjoined by the proprieties and prudence? Those who venture to love without a parent's sanction run an awful risk in Kaffirland. To be flogged to death is the mildest fate a girl may expect, if disobedient in this article. I envy the reader's happy chance if his experience of life would encourage him to believe me when I said that Lansula hesitated. Fortunately, Elliot gives no hint of resistance on her part. Some natural tears she shed perhaps, but her angriest sigh was only a futile wish that Nanasayo had been prince instead of old Umhao.

In due time the Imgobamakosi reached Kanodwingue, and took part in the Umkosi ceremonies. It was tolerably well known that the custom of some years past would be repeated, and that all the maidens would be given to Ikehla, ringed men, so called from the fashion of hair-dressing which a Zulu adopts after taking his first wife. This announcement caused extreme irritation

amongst the Young Undi, who had hoped that late displays of loyalty would cause the king to break an unnatural practice, which no traditions approve. But he persisted in his arbitrary course, the object of which puzzles alike his subjects and his white neighbours to this day. I am inclined to think myself that Cetchwayo had no motive beyond senseless tyranny. However, it was announced that the monarch would reach Kanodwingue on December 29th, would then proclaim new laws, and would furnish his trusty old contemporaries with a new bride or mou apiece.

And at the time appointed he came in state, closed the Umkosi feast with the usual formalities, and held a parade of troops. Those present consisted of three married regiments, 9,000 or 10,000 strong in all, and the Ingobamakosi, numbering alone about 7,000. The parade, of course, meant an inspection and a "dance past," in presence of the king, the officers of state, and some four or five hundred women of the household. Lansula had a place amongst them, and Nanasayo swelled with jealous fury on beholding her. He failed in respect to Umhao when dancing, but that eminent commander liked the youth, and overlooked his conduct—singular magnanimity for a black man! We may be allowed to imagine that the Kaffir chief who would condone a slight would be capable of surrendering to friendship a dozen girls out of his numerous hareem, with the king's

permission. It is possible that Umhao did not know the girl by sight, more than probable that he did not care a pin about her. The value of the match consisted in its testimony of the king's undiminished regard, and any of the hundred princesses would have answered that purpose as well. But these are my own reflections, not Elliot's nor Nanasayo's.

The parade over, people expected the customary speech, and the distribution of the maidens in attendance. But the freaks of a savage monarch who drinks *pombi* are not to be foreseen. Rising suddenly, Cetchwayo announced that he would promulgate the laws, and finish the ceremonies, at a kraal some ten miles away. Thereupon he climbed into his man-carriage and set off, attended by the women and the guards. Great confusion followed. Nearly all the chiefs of Zululand were present, with their retinues of state, inside the inclosure, whilst the common people had gathered in many thousands. There was but one entrance, and that unusually narrow even for a military kraal. After the king had passed, with his suite of many hundred, Umhao led out the first regiment of ikehla. It is a very slow business to pass 10,000 men, four deep, through a narrow gateway, opening on a bad road filled with women, courtiers, slaves, and baggage. Umhao waited on horseback till the first regiment had filed through, then cantered on. Meantime, through the Imgobamakosi

drawn up in order on one side the gate, and a crowd of irreverent vulgar on the other, the following regiments slowly wound onwards. Beer had been flowing all day, and, as the young troops grew more impatient, the banter became more personal. The natural rivalry of one corps with another was embittered by difference of age, by a sense of injustice, and by jealousy. Again and again these youths had seen damsels for whom they had a liking given to those greybeards. After long exchange of angry wit, stones and "knobkerries" began to emphasise a weak rejoinder. Then, towards 3 P.M. Nanasayo suddenly flamed up to mutiny pitch. Frantic with wrongs and beer he leapt to his feet, exclaiming: "Are we to wait like old women loaded with corn whilst the warriors pass by!" Forthwith he dashed at the gate, followed by all his regiment. Their irresistible rush cut the column of the ikehla in two, and trampled those who could not push back nor forward. Battle joined in an instant, and the gateway was choked. Some two hundred men only had burst through, after their leader, and none could reinforce them until the married regiment within the kraal was massacred. But Nanasayo pressed on, wild with blood and vengeance, and the enemy ran before him. Some two hundred yards from the kraal lay a nullah, or donga, or sluit, or dry ditch—for all these words are current in our army, Hindustani, Kaffir, Dutch, and English. It had some depth, and the

banks, as usual, were steep. At this point the ikehla made a stand, whilst runners went top-speed to warn Umhao of the outbreak. Seeing the enemy posted in numbers equal to his own, and reinforced each instant, while his men could not yet pass the gate, Nanasayo raised his war-cry, flew to the bank of the wide ravine, and cleared it in one prodigious bound. Two or three athletes followed him with yells, striking down the defenders, who expected no such attack. Aided by this desperate assault in flank, the Young Undi carried the nullah, and resumed the pursuit. Meanwhile, a merciless contest was raging in the kraal. Many of the populace took sides with the Imgobamakosi, and the ikehla, jammed too close to use their arms, perished to a man. But they fought gallantly, and corpses blocked the egress. Very few of the Young Undi had forced a way, when their fellows started again in a desperate chase, after carrying the nullah. Vainly did Nanasayo try to recall them. At every yard the fugitives increased their strength, overtaking companies in advance. The leader knew well that panic did not drive them. Each few steps the rearmost turned and threw a hurtling flight of asseguais, which dropped the nearest pursuers. Ahead of all, Nanasayo shouted his command to form, but the fury of Zulu blood was glowing, and the Imgobamakosi streamed on. Their fleetness of foot laid the veterans at their mercy, and the slaughter was great on that narrow rocky path.

But suddenly a change! From either flank, where the road descending passed between two hillocks, a volley of balls and asseguais swept through the pursuing crowd. At the same moment the fugitives slipped off right and left, and in front stood a regiment of ikehlas drawn up, steady behind their shields, resistless as death. But an instant they stood; then, uttering the warcry of Umhao, they pressed down the road with that swift eager step, which is the Zulu charge. The Imgobamakosi knew the chances of battle too well to face that mass. After one startled glance, in turn they fled to seek support, which was pressing behind. The heavy warriors could scarcely reach those fleet-footed youths, even with the asseguai, but the flanking parties, picked men, closed before all had taken flight, and laid many low. Nanasayo, unwounded, ran to imitate the tactics of his adversaries. Gathering, as he fled, the soldiers who streamed along the road, he met the strength of his regiment just issuing from the kraal, its bloody work over. In his turn he took up position behind the nullah, posted his flanking parties and reserve. Zulu tactics have little variety; in truth, they could scarcely be improved for the object. In a very few moments the *coup de theatre* already described was repeated;—Umhao's regiment halted in disarray before a sudden outbreak of fire on each flank. The retiring Imgobamakosi leapt into the crevasse, and climbed the

other bank with their comrades' aid. So, when the fugitives had vanished, the opposing regiments stood face to face across the ravine in numbers nearly equal, in arms, discipline, and spirit, rivals. If the ikehla had more guns, they did not know how to use them effectually, and the Imgobamakosi were aware of this. A grand chance of a fight it was, such as seldom befalls. The ultimate issue could not be doubtful, unless other "young regiments" mutinied and came to help, but in such a case the day's adventure suffices for itself.

Wild with the fury of approaching battle, upon each side warriors stalked forth, and stamped and screamed, and "whirred" like partridges challenging; in fact, their peculiar motion has evidently been copied from that of a cock bird defying his rival. Many asseguais were thrown at long range, and many random bullets fired, but the ikehla did not venture to attack. They waited the arrival of Prince Umhao, diverting themselves with bloodthirsty taunts and ferocious chaff, and every hit, though repaid with a whizzing asseguai by the victim, caused hearty laughter. Presently arrived Umhao full gallop, his suite toiling behind. Nothing is mentioned of proposals for surrender or compromise. After a hasty survey of the position, the ikehla charged all along the line, whilst a forlorn hope tried to force the weakest point. For an hour the struggle lasted, and it was desperate. "When Zulu with Zulu is joined,"

to paraphrase the words of Rowe, so eternally misquoted, "then comes the tug of war, the bloody battle sweat, and conquest dread!" A third of the Imgobamakosi fell, but they held their position, and inflicted vastly greater loss. As sunset drew near, the attacking party withdrew, and sullenly bivouacked a few miles distant. Their sentinels, however, were pushed so far out towards the foe, that many fell in the night, stalked by enterprising warriors. Supplies were abundant in either camp, for Cetchwayo sent in a convoy to his troops, whilst the mutineers had a large kraal behind them, full of provisions collected for the feast. All the inhabitants had fled.

During the night Nanasayo sent messengers to summon other bachelor regiments. It is curious that Elliot nowhere speaks of the Imgobamakosi colonel. He treats Nanasayo as commandant from the beginning of the trouble. A colonial paper mentions casually that "the fat prince" was crushed in the doorway, and there is ground for thinking that this ill-starred dignitary was colonel of the Imgobamakosi. However it be, Nanasayo evidently took command. He seems to have hoped that sympathising troops would join him if only he held his ground, and he urged them to strike a blow for freedom —and marriage. The bachelor regiments, few in number, were more than twice as strong as the married, and the total force of youths was almost as great as that

of veterans. One regiment therefore, if it joined him, would overmatch the ikehlas drawn from several kraals. But his messengers were interrupted, or failed to persuade. Not a man moved to help the Imgobamakosi, whilst the enemy was reinforced each hour. Confident in numbers, Prince Umhao renewed his direct attack at daylight, and the struggle continued, with long breaks and pauses, until night. The Imgobamakosi still held their own, inflicting greater loss than they suffered, but if no reinforcements came they must be overwhelmed. Bleeding, weary, and desperate, these ill-fated youths expected the day which would be their last. But I hear nothing of desertions or recrimination.

Towards the middle of the night, decisive news reached Nanasayo. Two scouts had been posted nine miles away upon the flank, in that quarter whence allies might be expected to approach. They heard the stealthy, rustling march of troops, the light clank of asseguais striking the shield, and joyously descended to welcome friends. One, slipping in the darkness, fell behind, and so escaped; for the other was instantly seized, and the column halted. By the few words overheard, as the prisoner was hurried off for examination, his comrade learned that this was a regiment of ikehlas marching to attack the Young Undi at daybreak, whilst their attention was engaged in front. Stealing away, he brought the intelligence which deprived Nanasayo of

his last hope. He called the officers together, and told them all was lost. The men quietly got under arms, and vanished in the darkness. All that night they marched towards the frontier, and the pursuers did not overtake them. But every kraal along the route had been warned, every point of advantage occupied. The retreat was one battle, and it lasted three days. So far as the Natalians heard, Nanasayo and his party alone escaped out of 7,000 men. The regiment, however, must have been reformed, since I observe its name amongst those who defended Ulundi.

The utter overthrow of the mutineers did not satisfy Cetchwayo. He sent out vengeful ikehlas to collect a penalty of three oxen from every kraal which had furnished a recruit to the Imgobamakosi. All their male relatives he ordered to be slain, and all the young girls of their family to be sent in as slaves. The offending regiment had been peculiarly aristocratic. Its officers were nearly all men of rank, most of them rich. Never had the ministers of vengeance such a feast as this. In "eating up" the Imgobamakosi, they not only furnished the king with many thousand cattle and several thousand slaves, but they found excuse, if colonial reports are true, to lay waste a quarter of Zululand for their own profit. Horrible iniquities are said to have been performed, and still the king was not appeased. Suspecting that some of the executioners did not use a zeal to match

his fury, he caused many of them to be "eaten up" in turn.

And thus ended the mutiny of Kanodwingue, a characteristic story which deserved, I think, to be put on record. I regret that my information does not warrant me in telling what became of Nanasayo. If it be allowed one to guess, with the aid of experience and some knowledge of the Kaffir character, I should judge that he hung about Durban, royally idle, imperially drunk, supported, without the least sacrifice of dignity, by the coppers of his more industrious compatriots. And, if he still lived when our war broke out, I would almost wager that he was well to the front with some of the Natal irregulars.

LEGEND SEVENTH.

A SNAKE'S SKIN.

Nowhere in the broad domain which used to be called "Animated Nature" is evidence of greater taste, of more thoughtful and delicate combinations, than in the colours and harmonies of a serpent's skin. The variety is endless, and always effective, ranging from the brightest, sunniest hues to the gloomy threat of dusk half-tones. Nothing exists more vividly beautiful than a flower-snake; nothing more superbly hideous than a Serastris. The misfortune is that beautiful reptiles are always delicate, and that their colours do not survive. I have tried every means feasible to preserve them, but the only effective method is forbidden to the traveller. I have ceased to collect snakes' skins for that reason, and if there is one still remaining in my bungalow it is saved by the small story attached to it.

That horrent, dusty, denuded hide once belonged to a tuboba. Every child—no doubt—knows this reptile to be one of the deadliest inhabitants of tropical America; where, in truth, there is a choice of such beings, human and other. My tuboba is of good size, but not unusual—about seven feet long; not stouter than accords with a fiendlike

agility, and provided with four fangs, of which the larger pair measure three-quarters of an inch. His mottling of brown and greys and tender neutral tones, the bold outline and intricate convolutions of their design, used to give me endless satisfaction when I chanced to meet a tuboba. But these lustrous beauties have vanished now, and the skin lies out of sight in a vase on that Bulgarian cabinet you know of.

Once on a time I was belated, dropping down the San Juan river, and so made acquaintance with the family which I have called Von Kampf. Next day at dawn, whilst dressing, clamour arose outside, clamour of that sort which announces peril. I snatched up a gun and hastened. Half a dozen persons were jostling in the door of an out-house, pushing backwards and forwards. I forced my way in. Upon the further side, against the wall, stood my host's daughter, fainting with sick dread. Within a few feet of her, right between us, a big snake was poised on gathered rings, dancing his head from side to side, and hissing savagely, now at the girl, now at the persons who distracted him, though they would not approach. It was the simplest of exploits to shoot the creature through the head at six feet distance; even more pleasurable seemed it, at that age, to carry the young lady to her mother.

And then that ended. An hour after I had gone away; and the old tuboba skin is all the record that

survives. But for long afterwards I asked with special interest when occasion rose about the fortunes of the Von Kampf family. She was such a lovely heroine to save, wasn't she, oh comrade of that travel, who envied my good luck so bitterly? And between fact and fancy, waking and sleeping, this legend has formed itself in my mind. Observe that I know it true in the outline; but how much of detail has shaped itself on the rough sketch supplied by correspondents, upon my conscience I cannot tell.

Once upon a time, a measure of reform in the Prussian navy offered superior officers very favourable terms for retirement. Amongst those who took advantage thereof was a post-captain, whom I will call Von Kampf. He scarcely claimed to be noble, he had no private means, and when he commuted his half-pay there was no prospect before him but emigration; for he had a wife, a baby, and the expectation of another. In the course of service he had visited the Spanish Main. The beauty and natural wealth, the fine climate, and the endless capabilities of Nicaragua, much impressed him. I have not personally found that sailors are more simple-minded than other men. On the contrary, my strange experience is that they are particularly wide awake as a class, perceiving their own interest, and pursuing it with a shrewdness and tenacity which landsmen cannot excel. But Captain Von Kampf was an exception. He put two

and two together sagaciously enough, but he failed to see that they would not multiply without operations impossible to execute. The climate and soil of Nicaragua are admirably suited for cacao and coffee, which Europe is eager to buy at prices which should be vastly profitable. Therefore, thought the good Herr, I will grow cacao and coffee in Nicaragua, and make a fortune. The premises were sound, but the result did not arrive.

Captain Von Kampf bought, for a nominal sum, a piece of ground between Castillo and San Carlos, on the San Juan river. It was partially cleared, and a hut stood on it. In two years' time the place was so far improved in all respects that he ventured to summon his wife from Germany. She came with delight, leaving the children at home. With her clever and careful overlooking and the captain's energy, their plantation grew to be as prosperous as such small enterprises ever are in Nicaragua, but no more. The coffee-trees were brought from San José de Costa Rica, the cacao from Dirioma; oranges were planted, a garden laid out; room by room the hut was enlarged. No more children came, which was not unfortunate, seeing that the nearest medical man lived a hundred miles away, and he had neither drugs nor diploma.

This couple worked without ceasing for the boy and girl at home, to make things comfortable and civilised as far as might be. I have them before my eyes now. A

tall, thin old man, with a wistful look; his close beard dashed with grey, as though time had clutched it by handfuls. A stout, frank dame, of the best German type, lower in breeding, I should imagine, than her husband, but gentlewoman to the core of her honest heart. The thriftless Creole ways had not touched them. The husband wore grey cotton in place of cloth; but his jackets were cut and buttoned after the fashion of naval uniform. The housewife discarded some petticoats probably, but she kept her stays, her decent peignoir, her cap, her neat shoes and stockings; and both one and the other were as tidy in their jungle home as if the admiral commanding were hourly looked for to make a general inspection.

The son came out at length, a bright, tall, handsome boy. He delighted in the place; shot, fished, explored the forest, paddled to Greytown or up to San Carlos, learned enough Spanish to make love, and then vowed there was no country like Nicaragua. It may be, however, that the knowledge he must return in three years' time for military service brightened the present exile. Before his sister came in her turn, the boy wandered off to the gold diggings, with little money but much sense, to pick up a fortune if it could anywhere be found.

When the girl arrived, Captain von Kampf was rather startled. I never saw a more beautiful creature of the German brunette type. Tall though she was, her dark

brown hair hung in two thick plaits below her waist. Black eyebrows perfectly arched, lashes glassy as silk, shaded large hazel eyes, full of life and humour. Her mouth, her figure, were perfect in slender symmetry. She looked pur sang to the bone.

I have said that the old couple laboured to make their home comfortable. Disappointed ambition did not now carry them beyond this modest aim. Not that the captain's estimate proved false. The climate, the soil, did everything that could possibly be asked of them, but there was no trustworthy means of carriage, no security for labour or produce. River thieves, travelling in bands, would strip a hundred cacao bushes in a night. Troops would halt in harvest time and sweep away the maize. The commandant of San Carlos or Castillo would "pronounce" for something or somebody—himself perhaps—and demand benevolences. Prussia was but Prussia then, a country scarce heard of in Nicaraguan affairs. I think it had no minister at all in the five republics, and its consuls were disregarded. Von Kampf prayed only that his small capital might be rescued for Anita's dower.

But in fifteen years of toil and sacrifice much had been done to make the house, and the ground about it, pleasant to a young girl's eye, and Anita was delighted, as her brother had been. A double row of orange trees, always in bloom, and always in fruit, screened the dwelling

from the river. On one side, to a person landing, was the garden; on the other, a grove of silky plantains; in front, the house, garlanded with roses. A fine tree left standing here and there had been encircled with a rustic bench, and draped with the loveliest creepers. Dogs, deer, monkeys, racoons, flaming macaws, dainty yellow paroquets, slept in the sunshine or fed in the shade. The inside of the house was not less quaint and novel. The coarse mud walls, the floors of beaten dung, were hid with mats, snow-white or coloured, after a fashion admired by Von Kampf on the other side of the world. Skins and horns and beautiful feathers were the ornaments, with a few treasured relics of civilisation.

In the first flush of enthusiasm, Anita declared that she could live in this enchanted spot for ever. For a awhile, in truth, the girl was purely happy. To sit under a tree, with her jungle pets around her, was intoxicating bliss. The scent of the orange-blossoms, the murmur of the river, the voices of the forest, lulled her sense to delicious dreams. At morning she was wakened by the thunderous roar of the baboons, the screeching of macaws, which flew and lit and rose again like a fiery cloud. In the hot noontide the cicales sang, the passing boatmen hailed each other in long melancholy shouts. At evening, the frogs began their concert, not inharmonious, the congos howled again, the parrots chuckled softly as they winged their fluttering flight towards

home. And then, at dark, when the lamp-light shone amongst the roses, and the pale mists curled upon the river, what music in the beetle's hum, what shuddering mystery in the scream that rang through the silent forest! Life became one sensuous romance—whilst the novelty lasted.

But of such pleasures the human mind grows weary, even when shared with love. Anita was an innocent girl, but at seventeen instincts are all the stronger because not understood. The weeks rolled into months, and no one visited the house save barefoot pedlars and sordid buyers of produce. The boats all went past, unless, at night, a party would land to steal. Then the big dogs would raise a furious clamour, and Von Kampf must go out with his gun, whilst she, trembling, crept into her mother's bed, and lay wide-eyed till his return. Upon the lofty steamer which went up or down each week were crowds of people gaily dressed, dancing often to music which recalled her happy years. How she envied them! The pleasures which had first enthralled her wondering sense now irritated and annoyed. That terrible howl at morning time, for which she used to wait with a delicious thrill, was known for the voice of a lazy, ugly little ape. The flowers were full of insects, the rose-trees sheltered scorpions and spiders. A hideous snake lived in every hole. Those dots on the river were floating alligators, the cry of the

boatmen a blasphemous obscenity. Nothing to do the live-long day; for on this plantation there was no girl's work. The male servants were stolid Indians; the women foul-mouthed, dirty, familiar. She hated the noisy sunshine, she hated the still night—she hated her life.

But Anita kept these feelings to herself as much as possible. Her parents had been overjoyed at that first delight, which scattered many anxieties. An idea fixed in their minds was not easily moved. But one cannot weep languidly for several hours a day without betraying some tokens of the exercise, and it presently dawned upon Madame von Kampf that her little daughter wanted change. Instantly the dear old captain ordered out his canoe, and paddled her off to Greytown. I could not describe Anita's joy in visiting that dreary little hamlet. There was not, I suppose, an unmarried white man in the place, where amusement is a word unknown for those who do not class drinking and poker as the highest joy. But there were people, life, sound of voices, movement, possibilities. Anita could scarcely refrain from speaking to the passers-by, from kissing the women to whom she was introduced. At the end of a week the captain brought her back, and loudly announced a cure. But within three days she was crying again, more miserable than ever.

Providentially, as these simple persons put it, Ludwig

paid them a visit at this time. Anita was herself again at once; she talked and laughed without ceasing. They strolled into the forest, paddled on the river, ran up to San Carlos, or down to Castillo, and there danced, without too close scrutiny of their vis-à-vis. Every senora knew Ludwig, and every don fell in love with Anita. But he left, and the old symptoms returned more alarmingly. Her mother took her to Greytown, but this remedy did not twice avail. Perhaps the child was older—between seventeen and eighteen girls rapidly mature. She came back scarcely better, and from that time began to waste and pale. The parents, anxiously reflecting, decided that want of exercise was her complaint, and they were probably right in some degree. But how could a girl walk alone in those trackless, muddy woods, peopled by wild beasts and savage men? The captain dared not leave his hacienda every day, the peons could not be trusted. The river remained. Ludwig had taught his sister to paddle, and, what was almost more important, had trained a huge tiger-dog to sit in the canoe. With painful misgivings, leave was granted the girl to go upon the water with her dog and her mother.

Anita did not care much for the privilege; she had fallen into the despairing stage. But it did her good. She moved, her young limbs found expansion; she seemed, at least, to re-enter the living world, though it

was but the world of a forgotten river. The rude boatmen seldom addressed her, so astonished were they at the apparition. When, by a chance designed, the canoe passed as closely as was safe beside the crowded steamers, all on deck rushed to the side.* If there were not a secret instinct which reveals to a pretty girl her beauty, Anita would then have learned that she found favour in the eyes of men. I can fancy her charming face under a sailor's straw hat, her lithe figure showing its exquisite contour beneath the white camice, the neat little foot and tiny glimpse of a bright-coloured stocking. I can fancy the pretty picture well, for I saw it and I held it fifteen years ago. It is not forgotten.

Seeing that no harm arose, but much good, of these daily excursions, Madame von Kampf became less fearful. When the cares of the hacienda demanded extra vigilance, she suffered Anita to go out under sole charge of the faithful Nero. If the girl when alone found the riverside population less indifferent, she was not so incautious as to tell. Their jests were too cynical for her distinct understanding. Gradually and unconsciously more freedom was granted, until her solitary excursion became part of the day's routine. Needless to say that

* Our story dates at the time when the Californian Accessory Transit Company still carried some twenty thousand to thirty thousand passengers across Nicaragua annually.

the privilege was not abused. The most determined of flirts would abandon all hope on the San Juan.

One afternoon, as usual, Anita stepped into her canoe, and Nero followed delicately. The river was high, flowing very swift and turbulent even near the shore. There was no danger, however, except the abiding one of "snaggs." Anita paddled down just outside the shadow of the trees, wondering sadly if all her life was to pass in this torpor. That was her reflection by day and night, and it so absorbed her that she did not look out as persons should who travel on a swollen tropic stream. Suddenly a crash, a swirl, and she found herself in the water clinging to a submerged tree. Anita was quick of body as of mind. She felt branches beneath her, and in a moment had gained a footing on the trunk. The situation was not alarming for a good swimmer. Not ten feet distant the overhanging branches of the forest dragged and swayed in the racing stream. The canoe, full of water, lay entangled among the snags; Nero, whining, breasted the current at a little distance. Anita moved cautiously along until clear of the branches, and let herself go. In three strokes she reached the shore firm and dry above the flood, and the dog landed beside her.

A path worn by prowling boatmen follows the river bed, passing behind Von Kampf's plantation. Anita always carried a pistol in her excursions, and with Nero

at call she had little to fear. There was ample time before dusk to regain the house, which could not be more than two miles away. To reach it, however, a favourite camping-ground of travellers must be crossed, and she recollected noticing an unusually large number of bongos moored on the spot. Under other circumstances, the mere sight of people would have been not unpleasant, but Anita was dripping like a Naiad. Very uncomfortable in body and spirit she went on, and her quick feet speedily brought her to the clearing. It was crowded with soldiers in ragged jackets of blue "ticking," who lounged and cooked, brought wood from the forest, smoked, gambled, sang, and quarrelled. Two tents stood in the middle of the space, one old, tattered, and dirty, the other white and new. Whilst Anita stood hesitating at this unexpected sight, considering whether it was possible to avoid the camp, she remarked a sentry watching her. The safest course then was to advance, and she stepped boldly forward. A buzz of admiration arose, and the soldiers crowded round, laughing, impudent, but not consciously insulting. Exquisitely beautiful Anita looked, I have no doubt, her eyes big with anger and tears, her soft mouth quivering. Nero preceded her, growling low and looking from side to side.

Ready to drop with shame, the girl hurried on. As she passed the tents two men stepped out, curious to

know the disturbance. One, tall and fair, stood motionless in admiration; the other snatched up a cloak and threw it round her, saying, in high-flown Spanish courtesy: "Pardon, young lady! It is the best the poor soldier has!" This ready act brought the tall man forward. "My friend's heart is sounder than his wardrobe, senorita!" he exclaimed. "Let me offer something more worthy to enwrap a celestial visitant. Pedro! my cloak!" It was brought before Anita could protest: an article of the loveliest quality, with fur and golden clasps, and brandenburgs, and what not. The girl would have preferred to keep the worn and faded garment, but this young man did not seem accustomed to refusals, and she scarcely dared somehow to resist. So, with murmured thanks to the other, she slipped off his gift, and the superior article was clasped beneath her chin.

"You have had an accident in the river," pursued the gentleman, composedly, "and you are hurrying home? I am right? You must let me escort you. Raffelle, my revolver! No lady-like protestations, I beg! My friend Miguele's soldiers are the most virtuous of their sex, but it is on record that angels have been tempted by a daughter of man, and what strength has even a saint tempted by an angel? Do you live far?"

They had set out already, for he did not seem to hear

Anita's objection, and he ignored the presence of Miguele, who followed stupidly. With a careless pat, and a lug at his ear, he had reduced growling Nero to utter bewilderment. The dog looked askance, and showed his teeth, but when these demonstrations were met by another good-natured lug he frankly surrendered.

In replying timidly, Anita revealed her foreign accent, which was instantly observed. "You are American, of course? No? English? Ah, how stupid I am!" Forthwith he began to talk fluently in German, though Anita saw it was not his birth-tongue. She stole a glance from time to time at this, the first gentleman she had met in eighteen months, saving her father and brother. No doubt at all but he was a gentleman, and how very clever, cultured, handsome, dashing! A child who had seen the world might have felt a disrespectful familiarity in his address, and an unpleasant arrogance. To Anita it seemed only that he spoke like a big, kindly brother. Masterful ways became her vague notion of a hero. By the time they reached the house this stranger had already taken hold of her imagination. But a view of the hacienda checked his flow of talk, laughing and rather impertinent. Anita was surprised to see that he frowned, like a man disappointed, at sight of her pretty dwelling. Captain von Kampf and his wife were seated as usual under a tree by the river, waiting their

child's return. She ran to them, relieved her feelings with a shower of kisses and tears; then vanished without more explanation, her anxious mother following. Von Kampf recovered his wits to find himself before a young man, who twisted his heavy fair moustache to hide a smile.

"It is no wonder, Sir," observed the latter, courteously, "that you are bewildered. Fraulein Anita ran her canoe on a snag, and swam to shore like a mermaid. As she crossed my camp down yonder, I took the liberty of lending her a cloak. Let me introduce myself. I am hastening by the longest possible route to join my regiment in China. My name is"—a glance at Miguele, and a moment's hesitation—"Yorke; and I may say, like our Scottish Norval, that to-day's happy deed gilds that humble name."

With frank cordiality the captain replied, and took his daughter's deliverer within. Miguele followed, and, in answer to the captain's glance, Yorke introduced him as "Don Miguele Arroya, captain of artillery, and my schoolfellow at Stonyhurst. He does not talk German." This remark, which sounded like a kindly hint, was not so intended apparently, for Yorke resisted every effort to turn the conversation into English or Spanish.

Anita came down, looking but the lovelier for her sunshine tears. The admiration of both young men betrayed itself in their eyes, and the mother's instinct, so long asleep, was roused. In his air, his manner, Yorke

had that indefinable something which tells of wealth. Duty enjoined it on Madame von Kampf to give her daughter an opportunity. She hurried off to add some Teutonic dainty to the evening meal, and on returning found the Englishman alone. Miguele had waited only to torture himself with a last vision, and then departed, after an awkward effort to carry Yorke away with him. That gentleman expected an invitation to dinner and to sleep. From childhood upwards, the parents of Beauty had competed for his society, and such an honoured practice could not be broken in Nicaragua. He stayed to dinner and accepted a bed. Two peons fetched his servants and baggage, an errand rewarded with five dollars "strong" apiece. Long before their return he had fascinated the good captain and his little daughter; the shrewd housewife yielded her arms before that lordly extravagance.

Next day Miguele came, very sad and dull, to say good-bye. He found Yorke established as fils de la maison, familiar with all in it, even the dogs and the heavy Indians. Miguele asked for a word with his friend alone, and, when that was lightly refused, he seemed to have something he would impart to Captain von Kampf. But his heart failed, and he withdrew, to convey his ragged recruits to Granada.

Yorke stayed a fortnight, one happy dream to Anita. Her parents trusted her, and she spent nearly all day

with their guest. He, a man experienced beyond most others even of his sort, found himself harmless before this girl's purity. He could not discover the stain to enlarge, the weak spot where his batteries might make a breach. Anita did not guess his thoughts. She was perfectly happy, suspecting nothing, asking nothing. As deep in love as he could ever be with an innocent girl, Yorke was cool enough to see that this condition of things might go on for months, if not for ever. He could not make his intentions understood nor take a step towards realising them. Absence has great virtue in maturing a girlish intelligence, and he tried it. Suddenly leaving for Granada, he stayed a month away. In the meanwhile, however, Anita had not been pining, wondering, or reflecting at all. Assured of her hero's return, she spent the hours in thinking of his perfections, the guileless pleasures they had enjoyed, and those to come. Yorke could really spare no further time in Nicaragua, and he savagely admitted that the recent exile had done him no profit. In his disappointment he announced the truth, and on the evening of his return declared that he must leave by the next Pacific steamer. Anita fixed her large eyes on him with the wistful look of a tortured animal. In his light-hearted way, Yorke sustained a monologue for some moments after, and went to bed.

Von Kampf saw the mischief done, but he saw also that there was no remedy. His wife, however, pressed

it on him to demand an explanation, and next day, with some pathetic awkwardness, he approached the subject. Yorke was astonished. He could not flatter himself, he could not have ventured to hope, that Miss Anita would feel his absence after knowing him so short a time, &c., &c. With the most graceful and gentlemanly impertinence the poor captain was routed and Yorke proceeded to pack up. He was going by canoe to San Carlos, there to take the steamer; and he ordered his servants to pick him up at a point they were acquainted with in the woods. Whilst this news was spreading through the house, Yorke wrote an elegant adieu to Madame von Kampf, patted the dogs, tipped the Indians, stroked the macaws and monkeys, and strolled towards the spot appointed, cigar in mouth. Half way he saw a girlish figure in the path, and his heart leapt. In no simulated passion Yorke ran up. "How good you are, dear Anita!" he cried. "You would not let me go without a word after all!"

"I could not!" she sobbed. "Oh, why do you leave us?"

"I told your father because duty calls me, but to you I tell the truth. I love you, Anita, and I cannot marry you. That is why I go."

"We can love without marrying."

"I want you to myself, all mine, to carry with me, to have always by my side."

"I am yours," she said simply. Yorke knew her better than to misunderstand, but in deceiving himself he hoped to bewilder her. With nothing now to lose, he kissed her hungrily, murmuring words of love, and hurrying her along the path. But Anita's instincts were roused. She held back, red and trembling. "Where would you take me, senor? Let us return." For an instant Yorke thought of carrying her by force, but the difficulties and dangers were too great. With his cheek pressed against hers, he tempted the girl in hot whispers to leave home and honour for love. Anita understood at length—forced herself from his embrace—gave her discrowned hero one sad, wild look, and went sobbing down the path. So sweet, so beautiful she was in her despair, that Yorke hesitated for a moment. Noble feelings rose to war with prudence and habit. But trees hid the girl from view, and the struggle ceased.

Months passed into years. Life at the hacienda followed its old round, but Anita no more felt the weariness. A sad heart within answered to the dull monotony without. Since the fairest being of the world she had regretted was treacherous and cruel, better to live alone, beyond wickedness and deceit. And peace came to her at length, when Yorke, supine with fever, weak and timorous, was thinking of his many sins and follies. Anita had never been forgotten. The love he had in-

sulted and cast from him dwelt, like the prayers of childhood, deep in his laden heart. When he arose he took leave of absence, crossed the ocean and the mountains, landed in the forest whence he had embarked five years ago. He hurried by the path well remembered, marking this spot and that, and reached the garden edge. Then, unseen himself, he beheld there, older, but scarcely changed, Captain von Kampf, his wife, Anita, and Don Miguele. No need to ask the relation of those two. Yorke knew the same despair which had filled Anita's heart, as he also turned and went away, without a glance behind.

Donna Anita Arroya y von Kampf is a happy wife; Colonel Yorke is a fast young man of forty, preparing for himself a disreputable age.

LEGEND EIGHT.

AN AFGHAN KNIFE.

It may be admitted by persons who have read these Legends that the writer's experience of humanity is unusually wide. In truth, there are few races of men with whom he is not more or less familiar, and this knowledge gives him confidence in declaring that, of all peoples on the earth, your Pathan, who the ignorant call Afghan, is least akin to the angels. The character of that individual has always been traced in the same words, by friend and foe, and by his own native historians: from the days of Mahmoud Ghuzni to Baber, to Nadir Shah, to Macgregor, and Haïdar Khan, his living countryman and chronicler, now charged (February, 1881) with pre-eminence in those evil qualities which he describes as essential to the Pathan nature.

It is not my habit to indite psychological treatises. What the authorities named have said is easily referred to. My department is broad facts. In the bungalow hangs, amidst many war-like engines, a long Pathan knife, souvenir of the late campaign. The story of its former owner is more instructive, I think, than a volume

of analysis. My knife is a murderous weapon, keen as a razor, but weighty as a hatchet, handsomely "browned," excellently wrought, the kind of instrument that could lop off an arm or pierce a breast-plate with its needle point. In its solid simplicity and purposeful appearance, it strikes the eye amidst fantastic and quaintly-fashioned swords around it as a thing intended for remorseless use by giant strength.

During the war I had a Pathan servant, Khuggiani by tribe. He was transferred to me by a friend, who said, "Afzul Khan has served me well amongst Afridis, Hazaras, Waziris, and the like. But remember that he who trusts a Pathan is a fool! Their own proverbs declare it, and I see daily reason to recall them. You must be doubly careful, for you are taking this man through his own country, beyond Jellalabad, and I have little doubt his tribe will oppose us. It is true he seems to have quarrelled with them, but one never knows the truth. Watch him continually when he gets up yonder; your other servants, indeed, will keep their eyes on him day and night." I thanked my friend, and asked how Afzul had come by his title of gentility, "khan." It appeared that he had been malek, or head, of a village somewhere by Jellalabad.

When the time arrived for me to start for the Khyber, Afzul Khan could not yet be spared. I left him behind. Weeks passed without news, and I forgot my Khuggiani

altogether, his face, and name. One day, riding back from Saffed Sang towards Gundámuk, with a small party of native troops, I met a stalwart beardless Pathan, mounted on a pony. It was in that ugliest of all hideous Afghan gorges, where a six-inch trail wound in and out amongst boulders and fallen rocks. Troops do not use it now, for the road was already making along higher ground to the left. Two horses could not pass, and foot-men had to choose their ground.

On seeing us, the Pathan drew apart, and stood still. As I went by, he stared, grinned, and dismounted hastily, advanced with a salaam familiar but not disrespectful, and took from his breast a bundle of papers carefully tied up in cloth. The native officer walking beside me held his sword at the point, ready to transfix the stranger at his first suspicious movement; for no device of the Ghazi fanatic is more common than to offer papers with one hand and stab with the other. But there was no such danger in this case. By the help of a letter I recognised my servant, Afzul Khan, who had travelled more than a thousand miles to find me. So far as I could learn, he had sought no escort nor protection. After leaving the railway at Jhelum he walked to Peshawur, there hired a pony to Jellalabad, and rode blithely up the Khyber all alone. The pass was much disturbed just then, but Afzul went safe through, changed his pony at Jellalabad, and pursued

his way. I congratulated him upon his pluck, and he accepted my praise with a grin.

But, on more careful study of the mass of papers accumulated on the march, I found less reason to be pleased. The sagacious rascal had levied a contribution at each halting-place. The friend who gave him to me left his note unsealed, that it might be shown upon emergency to identify the bearer as an honest Pathan—rare creature! But when cash is to be got there is always emergency with these people. It is an article of their faith to plunder. Afzul called upon every magistrate upon the road, and borrowed money on the credit of his letter. With three years' wages in his pouch, he begged five rupees here, ten there, to the amount of fifty-five rupees. In the kindest manner, these gentlemen, who were quite unknown to me, helped my servant along, entrusting to him a "chit" which stated the sum advanced. It would not be charitable to ask why Afzul did not destroy those papers. Let us give a Pathan credit for one dash of honesty when we see a chance. Had he torn them up I should never have known my debt, and never have charged it against his wages. One need not ask, either, why a man with cash much more than sufficient should borrow money everywhere. It is the nature of some; and they not the least prudent of mankind.

In appearance my Khuggiani did not handsomely represent his people. Though tall and strongly built,

he fell below the average of that gigantic race. He had the long Pathan nose and the vulture eyes, but his sallow-brown face was beardless. Afzul looked quaint, a very odd description for a Khuggiani. His mouth always wore a crooked sort of smile, in which the eyes had very little part. You never see a Pathan smile frankly, easily—I mean a Pathan of Afghanistan, for our fellow-subjects of that blood often have an agreeable look, which is something gained over a bad character.

Mindful of my friend's warning, I inquired, and found that Afzul's village lay some miles from Gundámuk. I told my servants to watch him, and they did so with vigilance, no doubt. Every man's hand is against the race which is hostile to all. But day and night Afzul hung about my tent, always crookedly smiling, always intelligent, ready. He asked no leave of absence. Some few days after our arrival I said to him: "You know there was a battle close by, less than a fortnight since?"

"Oh, yes," said he, much amused.

"The Khuggianis were engaged. Did your people fight?"

"In the thick! My youngest brother carried a standard and was killed." This with a grin.

"How many did your village lose?"

"Seventeen men, they say."

I did not pursue the subject. It was evident that Afzul had some means of communication with his people, but we could not imagine what they were. He never left camp, and my other servants assured me that he could not have spoken to the few Pathans who were allowed to enter.

Riding from post to post, up and down, with no adventures that bear upon this story, in due time I reached Lundi Kotal. There I chanced to meet one of the political agents of the frontier. As we strolled to and fro before my tent, Afzul came out with an empty bucket, and yelled to a passing bheestie. I observed, "That's a Khuggiani, of Gundámuk," and the agent looked at him with the air of a man who tries to recollect. Afzul put down his bucket and salaamed, with a grin broader and more awry than usual. Forthwith the sahib and the Pathan engaged in animated converse. They talked Pushtoo, of course, the current speech of Afghanistan. I cannot imagine why parents do not cause their sons to learn the less familiar tongues of the East, as a simple matter of business. A half-score of languages are used around the Indian frontier, of which the command of one only means a good income, a position more than respectable, and an interesting service.

After awhile, Afzul took up his bucket and withdrew. The agent turned to me, and said: "You have there one of the most reckless ruffians in the world. If he was not

a typical Pathan one would describe him in even stronger terms."

"It is murder you mean, of course. Does the crime run as far as parricide?"

"Not impossibly, but of that I have no knowledge. Come to my tent after dinner and I'll tell you all I know."

"One moment. Is it reasonably safe to travel almost alone with the fellow?"

"Reasonably safe, yes. If he does not see a chance very unlikely to arise, nor is tempted by some uncommon loot, the odds are that he will serve you faithfully. I have said that he is a typical Pathan."

What I learned from the agent that night—I am ashamed to forget his name—from Captain McNab, Assistant Political at Peshawur, and from Afzul himself, I have worked into a narrative.

At some durbar or ceremony at Peshawur two or three maleks, or chiefs, of the Khuggiani tribe, who chanced to be in the town, thought proper to attend. Amongst them was a certain Barat Khan, in whose suite Afzul had a place of no high consideration; but I have said that his face was one to draw the eye by its quaint expression. My friend, the agent, inquired about him, and learned that he was Barat Khan's brother. Twelve months afterwards or so, Afzul presented himself again with several followers.

"Why," said the officer, "you have risen in the world."

"Yes; I am now malek."

"Is your brother dead, then?"

"Not yet. The corn is shooting!" a proverb which means that there is time to spare, and that nothing will be lost by delay. "I'll tell you how the matter stands, sah'b. In our father's time Barat traded and grew rich. When he came back to our village he built a tower up the hill-side which commanded all the rest. No one interfered with him, spite of all I could say, for he was liberal; but I knew his evil heart. When the building was finished he gathered a dozen bad-mashes (blackguards) and lodged them there. It was given the malek to understand that he had best resign, and he, an old man, did not make a fight. Then my brother announced himself as candidate. A number of us wanted to resist, but the bad-mashes tramped from house to house threatening, while Barat sat in his tower, jezail in hand. I had been round encouraging the honest men, and on returning home he fired at me.

"There he was again at sunrise, with his gun cocked, and when I put my head out-of-doors a bullet singed my puggaree. Before he could reload I had escaped to the fields. The election was finished when I dared to return at dusk. The following dawn Barat was on the watch, but I had run away. Our mother interfered, and

peace was made. But from time to time a whim would seize the Sheitan; he would mount his tower and lie in ambush. Twice he hit me." Afzul showed the scars.

"When I came to your jirga last year," he continued, "my plans were nearly complete. Several honest men were eager to help me, and scarce any supported Barat. We had in the village an old idolator—*i.e.* Hindoo, rich and miserly. I asked his daughter in marriage, and was refused, like others. He did not mean to settle the girl among us, and talked of moving to Jellalabad. One night we forced the house, and took her. Barat came, threatening all sorts of things, but I had found the old man's money-box, and the people sent him away. Within a few hours I began to build a tower above my brother's. He protested and swore, rode into Gundámuk, and appealed to the Ameer's officer; but I had been before him with rupees. Until my walls commanded Barat's platform I kept quiet; then, without waiting till they were finished, I posted myself on a ladder inside, and watched. Oh, it was sport, though the coward dared not show. Before I had one shot, he resigned his post of malek, and the village elected me. And here I am, sah'b."

This was five years before Afzul entered my service, when the agent met him for the third time.

Before listening to the continuation of the story, I asked what became of the bride's father.

"Did I omit that incident?" said the Political. "'He was killed somehow when we went to his house,' is Afzul's light-hearted way of putting it."

It would seem that Barat had less nerve than his brother. After standing one or two shots he left the village, sought out a former partner, and resumed trade. Afzul does not know what has become of him, but the authorities at Peshawur have his fate recorded. Pray note this authentic episode carefully if you would gather facts about the Pathan character.

The friends, Barat and his partner, came down with goods and produce. For many years they had dwelt like brothers together. Upon this journey no quarrel nor disagreement broke out, and they reached Peshawur on the best terms possible. So much was proved alike by the evidence of comrades, and by the statement of the prisoner. In the serai at Peshawur, the friend, having mislaid his knife, borrowed one from Barat Khan. Their trade was satisfactory, and in excellent spirits they started for the homeward trip. Just outside the gate Barat Khan asked for his knife in a careless tone.

"Do you want it badly?" said the friend. "Then take it!" Therewith he stabbed him to the heart.

The murderer was seized, of course; equally of course he refused to say a word in his defence. When counsel tried to argue that he suspected Barat of stealing the knife he had lost, the prisoner indignantly rejected this

defence. But he gave no other explanation, and he died with his secret untold; if secret there was beside that inborn ferocity which tempts a wild beast to blood.

Before these events Afzul had become malek of the village, and a very restless chief he proved to be. His reign lasted something beyond a year. It came to an end in very awful circumstances. The Khuggianis are traditionally hostile to their neighbours the Ghilzais. As a tribal quarrel it is not very bitter, but certain villages of either people have a desperate feud with certain other villages respectively. I hope I make myself understood. In generations of desultory warfare, Khuggianis and Ghilzais in the mass have each held their own, but some communities among them have suffered particularly from the attack of other individual communities. Thus blood feuds have arisen. In such a case the lives lost on either side are marked and numbered for vengeance, and an honourable peace cannot be so much as thought of until the balance has been adjusted in human life or money. Afzul's village stood in arrear some twenty souls with its nearest Ghilzai neighbour. But the great chiefs on either side wished for peace. and the grand jirga, or council, was summoned, Afzul attended, of course, and he found malcontents in abundance among those who stood in the same case as he. When they discovered that the majority desired peace en bloc, so to put it, without regarding individual claims for compensation,

they raised so many difficulties, and caused so much delay, that the council adjourned. At the same time it was unmistakeably hinted that the great chiefs meant to have their way; the truth is that they and the Ghilzais meditated joint action against the Ameer's representative at Jellalabad.

Afzul went back, assembled his warriors, and explained to them the peril. If a general peace was made they must needs submit to their dishonour, since the jirga could not be defied. There was still time for a vigorous enterprise. If the village should conquer in an attack upon its foe, one of two results equally acceptable must follow, and both were likely. The blood-score which now stood against them would be reduced, and the Ghilzai jirga might be so irritated as to break off negotiations, and leave matters in their present happy state. It was decided, therefore, that the whole strength of the place should turn out for a foray.

The Ghilzais concerned had been arguing in the same spirit. They determined to crush their foes before the peace was made. But, whilst the Khuggianis resolved to march at night and attack at dawn, the others prepared to march by day and attack at sunset. Thus it happened that whilst the Ghilzais were mustering their scouts brought intelligence of the enemy at hand.

With the first grey light the skirmishing began. I have had the fortune to see such a combat. During my

stay at Basawul, the men of a village near went up into the hills just as did these Khuggianis. They were repulsed, and retreated all the livelong day, in our sight, disputing the ground. At evening time, pursuers and pursued passed before our camp, giving never a glance at the invaders, who thronged to watch the issue. It astonished us to observe how rapidly their awkward guns were fired, and how skilfully they found cover in that grey bare plain. Though we never saw a man upright, the puffs of smoke burst in a line, swiftly advancing, and concentrating round the mud-walls. When at length the beaten party had been pressed nearly home, and bullets, I suppose, began to fly among the huts, we beheld an extraordinary spectacle. The firing slackened, and a long train of women, children, and animals filed out between the combatants, who waited till they passed. Then the row began again, and continued till nightfall, the defenders firing from their walls and towers. I heard —and it is likely to be true—that General Gough sent out an order that this impertinence should cease. The victorious hillmen retired, and the women, I suppose, returned.

Such a fight, probably, was that between the Khuggianis and the Ghilzais. The former had the best of it. When things looked serious, the non-combatants prepared to withdraw. Hostilities ceased, of course, whilst they marched away, but the Khuggianis saw with in-

dignation that their laws of warfare were shamelessly infringed. I do not understand that the quantity or nature of the articles which women may carry off is fixed precisely. Common sense is the guide, and the claims of rank are not ignored. The mother of a family is free to take an animal—if she have one—for every member of it who can ride and cannot walk. Necessary clothes, provisions, and even a small sum of money, are not objected to; but the privilege must not be used to defraud the victor of his fair loot. As a rule this unwritten code is followed. I need scarcely say that many Pathan women refuse to profit by it, fighting and dying beside their husbands. It should be added, also, that they receive no hurt nor insult if recognised in time.

The Khuggianis believed that they were cheated on this occasion. In expectation of a fight whereof the issue was uncertain, the Ghilzais had packed up their valuables beforehand to place them in safety. To this prudent course no objection is made in general, but the circumstances alter when victory has declared itself. The clemency of the conqueror must not be abused to rob him. The refugees went by, however, unmolested, and the fight recommenced. The Khuggianis advanced more recklessly than usual in their anger, and carried the village. When the last Ghilzai who stood his ground had been crimped with alternate slashes like a fish, the younger of the victors dashed away in pursuit

of the most valuable booty. They quickly overtook the camels and unloaded them, amidst curses of the women and cries of the frightened children. The donkeys and bullocks had travelled much faster, but some of the children were very young, and the quicker they went the more accidents delayed them. One after another, these also fell into the pursuers' hands, and their burdens were overhauled. But Afzul and half-a-dozen more pushed on, with the untiring Pathan trot. A ten miles' march, half-a-day's fighting, and a run of twenty miles at the end, would not have alarmed them. I remember once, be it mentioned in parenthesis, asking an Atahzai Pathan how far it was from one village to another. "A day's journey," he said. The distance was sixty miles in a straight line by map. "What is a forced march, then?" I asked. "Half as much again," the fellow answered, and he spoke mere truth.

Afzul and his friends had marked the heavy burdens carried by some women of the richer class, who rode on ponies at the head of the cavalcade. The track led them to a cave among some lonely hills—an accustomed hiding-place, no doubt. When the Khuggianis reached this spot they shouted a warning, for the laws of Moslem decency must always be observed. Some elder women came to them, with hideous oaths and revilings, as the manner is of this brutal people. The Khuggianis ordered those inside to veil themselves and appear.

They did so, scolding, cursing, and lamenting. Then the plunder was dragged out. The women scratched and bit and tore as every package was opened, and the victors endured with such patience as they could. Valuable loot there was in carpets, silks, ornaments, and money, which justified the pursuit. At length the baggage of the malek's wife was brought forward. She, a savage beldame, had been foremost in impotent resistance, and when her own property was touched she foamed and shrieked with rage. A young Khuggiani lost temper, and struck her. In the instant she drew her knife and buried it in his side. Reeling forward, he split the old woman's head from crown to jaw, and they fell lifeless one on the other.

There was a pause. To kill a woman knowingly is the one crime unpardonable in the ethics of these people. The Khuggianis drew together and consulted. It was a lonely place; the women were but half-a-dozen, and the children about as many. One thought sprang to every mind, and their looks spoke. Better to destroy the evidence. The fugitives saw their resolve, and fled, screaming for mercy ; but in five minutes all were silent.

They threw the bodies in a cleft, drove the ponies on a mile or two, and buried the heavy plunder. They took what they could carry, shouldered their comrade's corpse, and returned. To account for his death was easy, and the Pathan is thoughtful in his cunning. These Khug-

gianis described to every one how they had caught the treacherous women, and deprived them of their treasure. They said no more, and it was taken for granted that the refugees had not been harmed. Even if the bodies were discovered, the crime would be placed to the credit of the gipsies. So the force of Khuggianis went back in triumph, conscious of "standing to the good" if peace were made.

No particular consequences followed. The authorities at Jellalabad, who naturally favoured Afzul's attitude towards the coalition, overlooked the matter for a small present. As the supreme Ghilzai chief made no complaint, the head of the Khuggianis rested quiet. After awhile, the jirgas met again, and abolished all feuds. Rich and honoured, Afzul Khan reigned in his village, until, in an evil moment, it occurred to him to ask the daughter of one of his accomplices in marriage. Though guilty himself, this odd fellow indignantly refused alliance with one who had killed a woman, and angry words passed. Shortly afterwards the man fell sick, and he accused his malek of poisoning him. Alarmed by the memory of his crime, stirred by desire of revenge, and feeling himself doomed, he confided all the story to the moollah and some leading men. Thereupon he died. The confidants were unwilling to credit a deed so heinous, which stained the proudest victory of their annals; but they went forth

secretly, and found the bodies at the place described. Other bits of evidence turned up to support the accusation. Those implicated were not sleeping. A glance, a movement, alarms the Pathan, whom instinct, if not conscience, ever keeps on the alert. They saw the storm gathering, and fled down the Khyber before it broke, carrying such effects as they could. Some five or six set out with Afzul, but two only reached Peshawur. The rest disappeared in those gorges wherein each pebble has been washed in blood.

About twelve months after his flight, Afzul Khan took service with the friend who passed him on to me. Bravely and faithfully he attended him through many dangers, and I had never reason to complain of my Pathan. I left him at Bombay, and he is now giving perfect satisfaction, as a letter tells me, to an officer of rank who fancied him when in my employ. The children, in especial, make him their favourite.

Here is a true story of the man who gave me the knife; not for money—proh pudor!—but for simple fealty and respect, with a tacit understanding that the value would be repaid him with usury. After digesting it you will be qualified to speak of the Pathan character quite as sagaciously as are those who read big books upon the subject.

LEGEND NINTH.

A CLOCK-ORNAMENT.

Shrewd you are, reader, I doubt not—experienced, I trust—critical, I hope; but men famous for these advantages have been puzzled by my clock-ornament. It has passed round a circle of guests to whom few curiosities are unknown by sight, and not one has given it a name with confidence. They say, at a glance, "Oh, a reptile's paw, carved in wood!" but, when I assure them that it is at least a fac-simile, they can identify neither wood nor reptile. You, reader, I have no wish to mystify. The thing is the forearm of a mummied crocodile, buried three thousand years ago or more, and dug up by these sacrilegious hands in the Saurian mausoleum at Maäbdeh. There is a head belonging to it in some cupboard of the bungalow; another larger head was sacrificed to scientific curiosity, and burnt, some years ago. A baby's foot, which I picked up in the same caves, has vanished, I know not how. The limb of that little innocent caused much distress to an amiable clergyman of my acquaintance. A pretty fragment of humanity it was, with little toes all perfect, which curled down just like your baby's,

ma'am, or mine. The worthy parson viewed this relic of antiquity with mingled horror and bewilderment. "Pray bury the poor thing!" he said. But we could not find a spot suitable. He would not give it room in the churchyard, nor would let me plant it in a cabbage-bed. So, pending a decision, the "poor thing" lay about till it got lost.

It is many years, alas! since I published an account of the adventure which gave me possession of these and other curiosities. Many travellers, no doubt, have explored the pits of Maäbdeh since my day, though I have not chanced to meet one. It may very well be that fanciful memory exaggerates the danger we went through, the perils and pains of the excursion. As the incidents dwell now in my mind, it seems that in obtaining my clock-ornament I ran the gravest risk yet encountered in a life not uneventful. But it is no old story I would tell, though the temptation in this case is strong. I think, of all my adventures, that, perhaps the earliest, rests most vivid in my mind. But the tale was told, well or ill, nearly fifteen years ago. It shall not be repeated.

What like is my trophy? Just like the forepaw of a crocodile, of course—each wrinkle, scale, and toe complete—carved with patience and dexterity inimitable in a solid block of oak. The colour is a rich but mottled brown; it has a natural polish beyond all art to surpass; and, the broken humerus encircled by a brazen plate,

mounted in ebony, it forms an ornament very quaintly handsome. None of the odd things scattered about my room have an interest comparable with this, saving the tripod which I obtained from an ancient tomb in Chontales. Though collected in scenes unlike our own, there is no mystery about them. The savage world is lower; its arts, even though more perfect, its luxury, though more superb, serve an inferior purpose. But this reptile lived in an era not less civilised than ours, when the human mind reached such heights of pure intelligence as never since have been outclimbed, when human hands accomplished work which we could scarcely rival with all the elements at our command. In this troubled, restless age we may admire the calm which reigned in Egypt; the orderly pursuit of what is grandest for an immortal creature; the submission of all to the law; the unquestioning faith in a Deity supreme and beneficent. But by this society, refined, artistic, learned, philosophical, the nursing mother of all wisdom, my crocodile was worshipped! Here is delightful food for speculation, as I smoke before the fire, and watch the hands of my clock go round until the short hours approach the long. In some such reverie I must have dreamed.

Upon the other side the Nile, facing the spot where now stands the wilderness of sheds and sties called Manfaloot, a white-walled city rose three thousand years ago. Situated on the edge of Lower Egypt, it was a military

post of special consequence, and the stately streets clanged all day with trumpet-calls, rattling of chariots, jangle of horse, and tramp of infantry. But its distinction was not altogether military. Maulhoût held the grand seat of crocodile worship. Other cities might adore the cat, the wolf, the Anubis ape, or the familiar duck; but these false divinities were scorned at Maulhoût. Its inhabitants knew that salvation proceeds only from the crocodile; to this precious gospel they testified with the zeal of martyrs and the ruthlessness of iconoclasts. In the savage wars described by Strabo, betwixt the saurian devotees of Ombos and the dog-worshippers of Tentyra, Maulhoût always furnished a contingent to its co-religionists. Some of the leading citizens took part in that cannibal feast of victory which shocked the ancient world.

They gave the blessed reptiles spacious and convenient quarters in a handsome tank communicating with the river. Some roved almost daily; others paid long visits, and then withdrew for months at a time; others gorged, and slept, floated listlessly, and basked the whole year round in their watery preserve. A causeway raised on arches led from the bank to a small island, where stood the keeper's hut. This man was a Tentyrite, for the people of Maulhoût held their divinities in reverential awe—to put the thing plainly, lived in a deadly dread of them. Not one would have dwelt where the godless

inhabitant of Tentyra was quite at ease. Historians have told us how the hatred and contempt of this latter people for the crocodile were utilised in the amphitheatre for Rome's amusement. The keeper of the sacred animals at Maulhoût was always one of this blood: a being regarded with awe, repugnance, and fanatical hate —but indispensable. For battles occurred daily in the tank, when some colossal habitué took offence at the visit of a stranger. Then, whilst the water surged and lapped against the granite sides; whilst its muddy depths were stirred with tails gyrating, and huge jaws snapped upon the surface; then the townsmen's hearts stood still to watch the proceedings of this Paynim. With an iron-pointed staff between his teeth, he sprang into the mélée, returning not until the authors of the quarrel were expelled. They bellowed, they clashed their teeth, they sank and doubled; but the Tentyrite pursued them with sharp digs and thrusts, in the depths as on the surface, until at length they fled through the portal, a great wave parting from their snouts.

When Nephoth was not there to quell disturbances, his little daughter worthily replaced him. She passed half her day in the tank, and its loathsome denizens knew her. She played tricks with the most savage, climbing on their backs as they floated; or, rising beneath them, knocked the wind from their smooth bellies with her head. Such ugly playmates were all

that Athor had. The girls of Maulhoût ran away at her approach, if they did not throw brick-ends—there are no pebbles in Egypt. The only other Tentyrites in the city were soldiers of that province, and they were forbidden to approach the tank; for it had happened several times that their hatred of the crocodile, freely expressed, caused public disorders. Athor had a dreary childhood, and as she grew up there were none to see how her limbs rounded into exquisite proportion, and her sweet eyes gained the conscious look of womanhood. Her father was bound to the reptiles for life, and she had no prospect better than a vague thought of succeeding him. Day by day the girl sat beneath the straggling and leafless boughs of a "doom" which overhung the water. The hideous flock of which her parent was the shepherd gently floated past asleep, as the circling current bore them. Their scaly sides ground one against another with a low, harsh noise. One sank without a ripple, or rose as softly. So close they passed that she saw the quiver of the membrane on their glassy eyes. The Nile beyond was creased with splash of swallows' wings, but no bird dipped in that dismal pool. The green tayr-allahs circled overhead, like flying jewels; but none came near. From time to time a fruit of the holy palm-tree dropped with a splash, and the gorged brutes opened one eye lazily. But then a group of citizens came up the road, and all

the tank boiled with life. For a squeal of pigs sounded near and nearer, victims offered to the gods. One by one they were dragged struggling to the brink, and pushed across. Then for an instant the water seethed, pigs screamed, men shouted and laughed. But the turmoil ended soon. Those deities which had secured a piece of flesh withdrew to hide it in the mud; others swam round, hungry and excited, for awhile, then closed their eyes, and floated sleepily.

So passed the time, day by day, for years. But once, as Athor sat thus listless, a soldier strolled up the road, and stood to watch the scene. He wore the uniform of that famous phalanx which routed the veterans of Cyrus and won the praise of Xenophon. It was largely recruited amongst the Tentyrites, and Athor knew of course that a detachment quartered in Maulhoût belonged to her tribe. The expression of the soldier's face, indeed, would have betrayed him. He regarded the crocodiles with scorn and loathing, whilst the huge dog beside him bayed so angrily that the brutes looked up and splashed. Athor ran in haste to warn her countryman that it was death for such as he to approach the spot. A sturdy fellow was the Tentyrite, very dark, very martial, seeming full of spirit and determination. He watched the girl's coming with a smile, which did not vanish at her shy entreaties.

"I am not afraid of crocodiles," he said, "nor of those

grant her this, and she accepted the ruling of the universe without demur.

In process of time the opportunity arrived. The Egyptian monarch prepared an invasion of Syria, and in the draft summoned from the garrison of Maulhoût the Tentyrites were all included. Half-a-million soldiers gathered in the neighbourhood of Heliopolis, whence the army was to march, under command of the king in person. No troops of the ancient world were equipped like the Egyptian. Those of Persia were more fiery, those of Assyria more stubborn, those of Rome more solid; but in all that pertains to supply and organisation the forces of Egypt had no rival. One felt there the thoughtful and cautious influence of a priesthood lavish of all means to gain an end fanatically desired but coldly reasoned out. This was likely to be a campaign of several seasons, for Egypt had made up her mind to crush the adversary, and Syria was a hard nut, often mouthed. The mass of soldiery were not enthusiastic, but prepared to do their duty. Martial tribes there were among them, however, who hailed the campaign with joy, and none more fervently than the Tentyrites. I have endeavoured to explain the unromantic fact that Athor and Macedo bade adieu without those railings and demonstrations against fate which are becoming nowadays upon occasions of the sort. If her lover fell, the girl might die of grief, but the risk was

inseparable from her scheme of human affairs. If he returned, he would bring the wherewithal for marriage and happiness; or, if not, it could only be said that they had drawn an evil card in the game of life. But an Egyptian, whether he worshipped cats or crocodiles, or what not, had a perfect trust in divine benevolence; and there Athor rested. Perhaps, if our maidens had faith as firm, they would be less heart-broken in a similar case.

Few mementoes had these young people to exchange. The girl wove a necklace of her long curly hair, and hung upon Macedo's breast a porcelain bottle. It came from unknown realms beyond the Eastern desert, and a zealous millionnaire had offered it at the interment of a crocodile particularly holy, aged, and vicious. Athor, when too young to know the danger, stole and treasured it.

The soldier had no such pretty keepsake for a mistress. His sword was his only ornament. A dog he had, however, of the breed still cherished jealously at Erment, Bairat, and the neighbourhood. Enormous animals they are, with rough black hair rising to a mane betwixt the shoulders, and red eyes. Macedo left his noble friend in Athor's charge when they bade farewell in the shadowy morning twilight on the river side. Not a cloud hung in the sky glowing palely overhead. The tufted heads of papyrus softly bowed as the swift brown water gurgled

by their roots. Flocks of sand-grouse rustled, wild geese clanged, high in air. Ziczacs, standing in the mud, gave forth their grating call. Perking sand-pipers prettily twittered: grey Nile-birds sped from point to point. And then, whilst Athor sobbed upon her lover's breast, the trumpet-call rang out. Macedo caught his heavy shield and ran, with gay words uttered in a broken voice. She followed slowly. Too many tears were flowing on that day for hers to be remarked. All the city was deserted, but the dawn spreading showed the long line of walls and towers thronged with a multitude. Under the river front a serried column of infantry moved towards the fleet of transports lying at the quay. These, gay with flags, bustling with sailors, dropped from their moorings down the stream as they received their complement. Upon the other side the town, a thousand chariots and five thousand horsemen stood drawn up, waiting the signal.

It came as the first sunbeam shot above the mountain tops, quivered for an instant in the air, and struck the highest tower with a shaft of gold. Then the solid mass dissolved, slowly and orderly unwinding. First went the cavalry, with tufted lances, waving scarves, and glittering accoutrements. The chariots followed, rumbling and clashing, four abreast. Behind them marched an escort of picked infantry belonging to that phalanx which was the pride and hope of Egypt. Macedo was

there, but Athor looked in vain along each row of swarthy foreheads and deep-shadowed gleaming eyes; the lower face and all the figure were hid by the enormous shield which distinguished these favourite warriors. Short time there was for search. The trampling horses raised a cloud of dust, which spread in the light morning breeze, and drew, as it were, a veil across the picture. Behind it cow-horns bellowed hollow, trumpets rang, wheels grinded, officers swore. A helmet sparkled on the verge, an orderly passed out and galloped up or down. But the army marched in a cloud as dense as that enwrapping its own future, and disappeared from view whilst yet the lover in the ranks might have exchanged a last farewell with his mistress on the battlement. Athor went home.

It was an occupation troublesome and sad, but not wholly unpleasant, teaching her dog to let the crocodiles alone. A real Tentyrite was the animal, for courage and for detestation of his hereditary foe, but ill-matched to cope with him. The causeway had a parapet, built to keep the reptiles from intruding, but suffered lately to fall in ruin. Athor repaired it carefully, bringing mud from the river, and bricks from the shattered walls around. Till this was completed she did not venture to let her dog run loose, but meanwhile she accustomed him to sit on the embankment and see the hated brutes float by. He learned to watch them with no demonstration more

angry than a growl, and then, the parapet rebuilt, she gave him freedom.

The zealots of Maulhoût did not behold this addition to their keeper's family with unconcern. They proved the indecorum, not to say the blasphemy, of bringing a dog, and that a Tentyra dog, into the presence of deities notoriously hostile to his kind. But old Nephoth loved the daughter to whom he seldom spoke, and this favourite of hers was a sort of countryman. He had money, or money's worth in trinkets and valuable offerings, obtained like the Chinese bottle which Athor gave Macedo. If the dog were expelled or injured, he would go; and Maulhoût trembled at the threat. So it remained. Athor had not hitherto disliked the crocodiles, which knew her, and came to her whistle. But now she hated them, and when nobody could see she threw hard things at their shining eyes. If their optic nerves escaped, their divine feelings must have been hurt.

One evening, when the army had been gone some months, Athor took her customary stroll towards the grove where she first met her lover. The dog did not follow, and at the far end of the causeway she turned to whistle him. Her heart stood still with fear. A huge claw gripped the parapet, and dragged it crumbling down with hooks of steel. While she looked the wall gave way, and a monstrous scaly snout was thrust

above the gap. The other claw appeared, and then, rolling and heaving, the vast shoulders arched themselves to clamber out. Athor recognised the creature by a gold ring in its nostril. It had long been absent from the tank, expelled by Nephoth for incurable malignity. She flew to drive it back, but in that instant the dog came galloping along the causeway, now blocked by a crouching monster whose wet scales gleamed redly in the sun, whose death-like eyes peered cruelly up the path. Athor knew her favourite was doomed. Fleet as a stag she ran to save him, but the loving hound was quicker. He galloped on, but at sight of that foul reptile he stopped short, then sprang upon his enemy. The brute's tail curled in a resistless sweep —the long jaws snapped like scissors—and all was finished.

Bearing his prey, which still quivered, the crocodile turned heavily, and launched himself into the pool. Athor thought of nothing but revenge. She drew her knife, plunged in, and buried it behind the creature's shoulder. No time there was to withdraw the blade. Turning over and over, one claw outspread in agony above the surface, the crocodile went rolling down the current. His tail threw fountains into the air, his hooked teeth clashed. Athor climbed out, frightened now, but not regretful. Were she bound and waiting to be pitched into the tank she would not be penitent.

And that fate certainly would befal her could she not escape. Nephoth was slow of comprehension, but he loved his girl, and he saw her fright. Seizing his treasure he hurried with her down the causeway; their feet were wetted with the blood of that faithful hound. Whilst they ran, themselves unnoticed, they heard citizens arriving with their noisy victims. A fishing-boat lay in the river, and the two sprang in, paddling like fugitives whom a hideous death pursues. Upon the third day they reached Tentyra, but the avengers were not long after them. The crocodile's body had lodged in stake nets which half filled the river just below, and Athor's name was engraved upon the handle of her knife. Maulhoût demanded the surrender of the criminal, and Tentyra laughed. The more the deputation raved of sacrilege, the louder swelled that chorus; and at such a time, when the best champions of Ombos were away, Maulhoût did not dare try force. So they gave the martyred crocodile a funeral of extreme magnificence in the caves now called Maäbdeh, and—— his paw is my clock-ornament.

As for Athor, she lived and died as happy as woman can expect to be. Macedo came back, with glory and wealth, to marry her. In after-years, when he commanded the phalanx, grounds of jealousy appeared sometimes. But Athor's troubles were not serious, for she knew her husband loved her.

LEGEND TENTH.

A TRIPOD OF EARTHENWARE.

I envy the well-balanced mind of those who can declare off-hand what day was their happiest of life, what country most agreeable, what woman supreme of loveliness, what horse most cherished, what music stirred their inmost soul beyond all other. I have no such capacity of weighing past joys and hardships, former loves, feelings extinct. The present time has always its enjoyments, and, if they appear less keen than formerly, I attribute the change to years, not to outside circumstances. The life of courts and camps is not unfamiliar, and I can take as much delight in them as most. Yet, when I give memory the rein, it strays to the purposeless wanderings of early youth, rather than to the scenes, vastly more interesting, which have passed before me in maturer years. The Franco-German War, the discovery of diamonds at the Cape, the downfall of Ashanti, the Servian struggle, the crossing of the Danube, the return of the Czar to St. Petersburg, the Berlin Congress, the invasion of Afghanistan—all these were great events, whereof I was spectator more or less close; but if one

caught me musing—nobody ever shall, but if he did, the chances are that my thoughts would be turning towards Borneo or Central America. It is the merest waste of time to recall these useless journeys. Peace or war in Europe is a daily question, answered each nightfall only for the next few hours; governments are anxious, empires quivering, peoples stirring. This is no fitting time for trivial recollections. But, que voulez-vous? I am tired of it all, and when opportunity arises I turn from the endless web of politics to think of days, not sunnier perhaps, certainly less exciting,— but days, in short, when life ran more smoothly for me and for Britain—when the glamour of youth touched every scene, and we travelled, like our country, "by leaps and bounds."

But few mementoes remain of my Central American journeyings. In the British Museum you may see the pottery and the carved stone-work which we dug from ancient graves; but I collected few other objects. Some skins of wild beast, snake, bird, and lizard, the tripod which is now my theme, and—I am writing frankly—a long tress of rippled hair, exhaust the catalogue. Little is there in those poor republics, hopelessly sinking to decay, which attracts the stranger. I do not mean that they are quite uninteresting to traverse. There is something to occupy the mind in every quarter of the earth, and here not least. But the study is confined to man, his immediate doings, and his future. The past history

of these countries, though happier and more promising than the present, was never very grand. The Toltecs built no astounding works here, as at Copan, Palenque, and Cholola. The Aztecs had no court of barbarous magnificence. Herrera describes a land swarming with people famous for their beauty, luxurious princes to whom gold was dirt, "villages" of twelve thousand souls, and towns of fifty thousand. Their arts were far enough advanced to give elegance to life, but not to leave enduring traces. This cacique had a body-guard of five hundred Amazons, who bore golden hatchets edged with bronze; that other presented Gil Gonsalez with twenty-five thousand "pieces of eight," many garments, and plumes of feathers. But they seem to have lived in wooden palaces, enormous of size, no doubt, and handsome enough.

Nothing remains of their splendour, not even temples, and the works of the Conquistadores have scarcely proved more lasting. The fort of Hernandez de Cordova yet stands by the lake side. The cathedral at Leon can still support a battery of eighteen pounders on its roof; the Plaza of Granada was encompassed by stately palaces within the memory of man. But all those buildings which have not vanished are daily vanishing. As for arts, ancient or modern, they have long passed from sight. Guatemala alone, so far as I can summon facts unrecalled for many years—Guatemala alone manufactures even

clothing for its people: and this is an ugly woollen stuff, suited only for the mountains. For every thing, except raw produce, even prosperous Costa Rica is dependent upon other lands. I do not think we could have brought away more curiosities than we did. A quantity of golden images, from that strangest of all "diggings" Chiriqui, was offered us at San José de Costa Rica; but as works of art they were execrable, and the mere weight of gold made them expensive. There was nothing else—except pumas! I am almost sorry I did not bring away a puma. Amongst those brought for sale there was one which ensnared my heart of hearts. He would have been dead, probably, by this time, but what fun we should have had together in his days of youth! If these "legends" do not weary a patient public, I will choose for a text the skin lying before my fire-place, and discourse of pumas one day.

But for the moment we are concerned with this tripod. It stands on three bottle-shaped legs, about four inches high; the legs are hollow, and one, which I have laboriously emptied of dirt, through a hole in the side for that purpose intended, contains a marble, which rattles. So the Indians to this day quaintly fashion any article of earthenware which has legs. The basin thus supported is six inches in diameter, and one inch deep. Its material, shown by a fracture, is the roughest clay, hidden beneath a slip of cream-colour, very thick and

smooth. Legs and basin are encircled by ruled lines, as it were, of chocolate paint; between them at irregular distances are single characters and groups. If these be only decoration, the perverse ingenuity of man has never yet designed anything so senseless and uncouth. They are mostly angular, but a proportion have the segment of a circle, or the circle itself, with or without a dot variously disposed, attaching to them. Unlearned persons instantly say, "That's writing," and it would need much evidence to satisfy me that these simple archæologists are wrong. My tripod is not the only object displaying such curious marks. Every piece of earthenware I recovered, which had the light-coloured "slip" so convenient for inscription—and they were many—showed such an arrangement of similar characters. Any unprejudiced observer who saw them might declare at once that the antique potter used to write mottoes on his ware as did our own forefathers, the equivalents perhaps of their "Waste not want not," "When thou hast drunk be satisfied," &c.

But this is beside the purpose. When the result of our diggings was presented by Mr. Jebb and myself to the British Museum, I kept back this tripod for several reasons. In the first place there were several like it; in the second, it was given to me; and in the third, it had a tale belonging to it.

Once upon a time an Indian dwelt with his family

under the shadow of Mombacho, the great volcano overhanging Granada. I begin the story thus, because such an opening is effective; as for the plain fact, he dwelt there only fourteen years ago, and I hope he is there still. This fellow had built his hut with stones gathered from an enormous cairn, surmounted by statues and carved figures. When I saw it, the mound of pebbles was still imposing, though it had been a quarry for all the Indians about. Before such depredations, the tomb must have covered sixty yards by forty, and it was seven feet high above the ground. But the statues had been overturned. The peon told us that on his arrival there were five upright and two recumbent, so placed, evidently, by the sculptor; but all more or less defaced. He himself had dragged one to his cottage, and hollowed out its back, for his wife to grind her maize upon. But we found heads and torsos belonging to at least a dozen figures which had once stood about the spot. Generations of fanatical peons had been labouring to destroy this monument of their heathen forefathers, and they had been too successful, here as elsewhere. We discovered the statue, pre-eminent of size, which was probably a likeness of the dead chief. It had stood, apparently, at the end most favoured by the Indians for digging, a huge block of stone, seven feet long even now, eighteen inches broad, and twelve inches thick. The figure represented an old warrior, with stern brows

parted by a heavy wrinkle, who clasped with both hands a spear, held to his chest. The costume could not clearly be made out, owing to mutilations. Among the other effigies was a woman, dressed in close robes and wimple; another half naked. A sleeping figure struck us much by the ease and nature of its rude art. A striking object must this tomb have been, when all the country round was cleared and tilled, as it certainly was three centuries ago. But, when we visited the spot, trees growing from the cairn itself concealed it, the desecrated statues lay amid rank herbage, the outline of the monument was smoothed down, until, at a hasty glance, one would have even taken it for an accidental elevation of the soil.

We had not intended to stay the night at this place, but the tumulus, though too large to excavate, occupied our interest and our sketch-books till it grew late for returning to the hacienda; where, in truth, we found poor welcome though it was dearly charged. The Indian was ready enough with such accommodation as he had, and his demand, though extravagant to absurdity, would be only a few coppers. When our servants had swept out the larger room, they hung our hammocks, and departed; for what object, or what pleasure, they themselves only knew; but such was their custom.

The hut of an Indian, if it be divided, has a partition of bamboos, stuck three or four inches apart, like a bird-cage. There is no privacy behind a barrier of this kind,

and the use of it is one of those accepted fictions which everywhere prevail in some form or another. Our host and hostess politely retired, with their many children, when we had devoured the tough beefsteaks and the leathery tortillas, fiery with pepper, which made our evening meal. But the afternoon's talk had excited them. Nobody before had asked about the cairn, or showed curiosity regarding it. In the semi-darkness—for we had hung rugs and cloths on the partition — they whispered of extraordinary things, and the listening children put questions. It was quite early; we had no desire to sleep; and after awhile, roused by the murmuring conversation, we invited the peon and his wife to tell their tale over a glass of schnaps. It is deplorable, it is wrong, that men should drink; and yet worse, that women should bear them company. But my experience is that if one wants information, especially from reluctant persons, a dram works more effect in some few seconds than handsful of money, and most brilliant argument, in a day.

The Indian looked old, and his wife yet older; but the comeliness of their race is not enduring, and they had a child scarcely two years of age. The pair removed to this spot soon after their marriage, some twenty-five years before, when the peons were emancipated. The cairn at that time was untouched, though some of the statues had been upset, and all battered.

Other slaves, freed by the proclamation, presently gathered to the place, which was suitable for the culture of indigo. They found it less troublesome, upon the whole, to build substantial huts, where the materials lay to hand, than to form a wigwam of boughs, as is customary. So, by gradual undermining, the tumulus was ruined. No object of value turned up.

After giving these very unimportant details, the old man paused, with the air of one who has said all his say. We refilled the glasses; for there was a more interesting narrative to come, if only these obstinate and suspicious people could be induced to tell it. They drank silently, however, until, utilizing hints picked up from their conversation with the children, I observed: "There is a lady in Masaya who declares that you dug a pot of gold from the tomb."

This taunt roused the dame. She hastily put down her goblet, crossed herself several times, and proceeded to curse Donna Dolores with intense spirit and volubility. "The woman without shame," she cried; "may she, &c. The thief, the gallows-bird, the evil-minded, idolatrous Indian! This saint and that look down upon us two, and bear witness for me!" Thus, stimulated by schnaps, did our hostess appeal to Heaven against calumny and wrong. By the exercise of some patience we brought her to facts, and, with a last significant reminder to the saints that there are powers ready to

help the innocent if they should be so incautious as to refuse, the old creature poured forth her tale.

Some twenty years before, the rains had been very heavy for a week. After they stopped, in passing the cairn, she observed that a large mass of stones had given way, and some presentiment caused her to approach. A quantity of potsherds, newly broken, lay amongst the mud and slush, and, in the middle of the gap, she saw the rounded extremity of a huge jar, slipper-shaped, such as the Indians still use for holding corn. Sometimes they make it themselves, but more frequently they dig it from the site of an ancestor's dwelling. It is an absolute fact that in some parts of Nicaragua, especially the island of Omotepec, the natives turn up the soil for ready-made pottery when their household stock falls short. The appearance of this object, therefore, did not by any means astonish an Indian woman. She knew, however, that it was no common find. Why the ancient inhabitants of Nicaragua should have buried pots and pans by the dozen in their back-gardens is a puzzling question, for seldom is there anything inside. But the case is different when such heaps of earthenware are evidently funereal, especially if covered by a mound so huge as this. Every child knows that somewhere amongst the ruins will be discovered teeth, fragments of charred bone, and many things beside. The huacos of Chiriqui, already mentioned, were but graves, peculiarly rich, and

unmarked by cairns. No tomb has been found in Central America to approach the wealth of those occasionally discovered in Peru, and none probably exist; but very many have given fortunes, as fortunes go out there, to some patient digger or some lucky Indian. It might be supposed that a population of gamblers, inhabiting a country full of ancient tombs, would devote themselves to the task of opening them. But experience teaches that the profit is very uncertain, whilst the labour is tremendous. A class of persons does exist who follow the profession of grave-breaking, but their appearance does not encourage imitators.

Our hostess, then, knew that she had made a great discovery, and stood breathless. Dusk was settling down. The high bald top of Mombacho still glowed with orange fire, but below, where the lake had been rolling and shimmering like quicksilver, was now an isleless vapoury sea. The pale green fields of indigo were darkening; the forest shades began to creep over the land. It was an evil moment to defy the fiends who had ruled so long, and are still powerful despite the Christian saints. The stern eyes of the old Chondal warrior scowled downwards. While the intruder glanced towards them in superstitious dread, they seemed to take life and fire. She threw her shawl across her face, and hastily withdrew. With the first light she would return, and carry off the treasure. The old Carib devils are strong only

in darkness, and for a trifle the priest would consecrate this pagan gold, and remove it from their influence for ever. Besides, she might give a portion to good works —have masses said for the heathen chief; everything possible should be done, if only the plunder was rich enough.

So the woman went home in a fever. Often she glanced stealthily aside, thinking that the awful guardians of the tomb were mustering in her path. The night-hawks, flitting noiseless by, made her scream; the charred familiar stumps took monstrous shape. When the hut was reached, and the door banged to without a look behind, she fell upon a seat and stayed there trembling. Her husband was at Granada; her children too young to be companions. The woman tried to occupy herself with household duties, but strange sounds swept by the lonely dwelling, strange shadows glimmered on the walls. After putting the babies to rest, she struggled awhile against a nameless terror—then threw herself upon the bed with them, and covered her face, and lay in the sweat of fear. The old gods of his fore-fathers are very living realities to the Indian of to-day. He knows where they stand, open-mouthed, fierce-eyed, in the gloomiest recesses of the woods. He knows, too, that they are not deserted, that many of his fellows practise dreadful rites before them, and a thousand whispered legends testify that their malevolent aid is not

refused, if properly besought. Until she could gain the protection of the Church, this woman, who cherished such designs, lay at their mercy. Sick with terror she passed the rattling beads, and murmured "aves" without a stop under the muffling of her shawl. But the dogged Indian character is stronger than panic, stronger than superstition. She never thought of abandoning her resolve.

Suddenly the blood in her body stood still, her forehead wrinkled in agony, but no cry would issue from her gasping jaws. There was a rustle at the door, and a heavy thud. The mother seized her children in each hand and crushed them to her bosom. They wailed with pain and fright, but she sat up, unheeding, agonised, choking. Then came a voice calling her name, and a tap. "Do not be frightened, Christina querida! It's I, Tia Dolores!" The blood ran slowly back into its courses, with a painful pricking. She knew that this was a delusion of the fiend's, but the sound of human utterance restored her. The elder child ceased crying, and exclaimed, "I am frightened, Tia Dolores! Oh, come to mamma." The terrified woman regained a little courage. Upon innocence the wiles of Satan have no power, and her daughter recognised the visitant. Adjured in our Lady's name, Dolores swore that she was human, and then, tottering to the entrance, Christina pushed aside the bar. But she almost fell backwards when a big dog sprang in, and the neighbour caught her.

After such a parley, it would have been useless to try and keep the secret. Dolores was much older, and her reputation in the scattered little settlement was that of a person very wise, and grave, and resolute. She had come to borrow some small article of housekeeping, but her errand was forgotten in the excitement of this news. Hour after hour they talked of it. Dolores strongly commended her neighbour's prudence in waiting for daylight before touching the urn. She, an Indian from Omotepec, had a dozen gruesome tales of vengeance executed by the gods on those who slighted them without securing the protection of the saints. The religious exercises necessary were well known to her, and they agreed to perform them before sunrise. Then Tia Dolores rose to go, quite cool and fearless, though she must pass almost beneath the shadow of the cairn, and the moon had not yet risen. Christina had no such bravery. She implored her friend to stay, offering a quarter of the treasure if she would consent. Though quite willing to accept these terms, Dolores pointed out that she must run home to warn her husband, an austere man, who would beat her black and blue before she could explain. This argument was too obviously sound for contradiction, and she departed, leaving her dog. Christina sat trembling and startling for an hour, her anxious eyes fixed upon the slumbering guardian, which, as she knew, would cower and howl at the approach of

evil things. At length he sprang up, ears erect, and tail extended; then with a joyous bark ran to the door. When it was opened, at Dolores' knock, he gave no attention to his mistress, but bounded past her through the dewy weeds. As Christina looked after him with surprise, she heard a yelp of pain, such as a dog gives when hurt.

"What is the matter with the perro? Has your husband come with you?"

"Oh, he is a tiresome creature!" answered Dolores in some confusion. "You know there has been a tigre (jaguar) prowling about the village lately? I suppose he has got upon its trail."

Christina had not heard of a tigre, but the explanation was probable enough. She thought no more of the matter, and went to bed.

Before dawn the women rose, commended their enterprise to heaven by what prayers are enjoined in such a case, and sallied forth, leaving the babies asleep. Daylight was breaking. Mombacho lay hid behind a veil of clouds, rolling outlines faintly lustrous towards the east. The tomb, dripping under its trees, lay blurred and indistinct. An early congo howled on the forest edge, and at that thundering clarion the birds awoke, the huge bats hastened home, a pair of parrots flitted croaking overhead. With one simultaneous scream a flock of red macaws took wing, and flapped upwards from their

shelter like a flame arising. The silvery edges of the mist took colour, the clouds rolled back on either side, showing a sea-green sky. Lighter at every step became the path; the dew-drops twinkled. Then the fog lifted, hanging in swathes across the higher branches of the trees. The first beam of the hidden sun tipped the upper world with golden glory when these women reached the mound.——It was rifled. Urn and everything had disappeared, saving this tripod which I keep. It lay upside down in the gap.

We may pass over their laments. Christina was not suspicious of disposition, and, besides, there was no one to suspect. Some other Indian might have anticipated her in discovering the booty, but this was improbable. More likely the evil spirits had removed it. So Dolores thought, and she was an authority. In bitter disappointment the two returned, carrying for all their treasure this small piece of earthenware. Dolores strongly advised that the whole story be kept secret, and Christina agreed; but when the husband came from Granada she told him, of course, and he was very angry. Without questioning that Carib devils had removed the gold, he thought that his wife should have been beforehand with them. In such a case Heaven does not grant two chances. There were lots of jicara-trees by the hut; what more easy than to arm oneself with their cruciform leaves and defy the enemy? He was not a bad man,

however, and he loved his wife. When Christina wailed her cowardice with tears, he gave her comfort. Perhaps it was best. The opposing powers were evidently active and resolved; perhaps ill-luck would have accompanied the wealth. Rich people often have a short existence, and not a merry one, in that country; so the Indian concealed his disappointment under a cloud of philosophical reflections.

Christina, therefore, was as much surprised almost as hurt, when, coming home one afternoon, he forthwith knocked her flat, and beat her with the handle of a hoe. Such marital castigation is not at all a rare event in Nicaraguan households, but this pair had lived hitherto on better terms. When suffered to get up—a hoe is an awkward instrument to brandish long—Christina humbly asked her offence. "You stupid mule! You ignorant Indian!" exclaimed her husband. "Whilst you were trembling at your shadow, Tia Dolores went out bravely and robbed us. She is the woman I ought to have married! She thinks of her husband and her children, and goes into danger for their sake! Dolores isn't a heathen Carib, afraid of idols, unmindful of the blessed saints! the thief, the creature without shame (sin verguenza), the atheist, the &c., &c." It was long before the wife could get a more lucid explanation.

I have said that the huts were far apart, and those who know Indian habits are aware that social intercourse

is restricted. It would seem that Tia Dolores, her husband, and children, had quietly left their hut, with the simple furniture inside, one day at least before their absence was discovered. Even then it excited little stir, for they might have gone to Granada or Masaya, though it was improbable. But the alcalde of the district happened to come round, and he took up his abode, of course, in the abandoned dwelling. The Indians attended on him there, and such quick eyes speedily remarked that Dolores and her family had no intention of returning. This, in itself, would have been interesting only, not surprising; but presently a gold rattle was picked up by the alcalde himself. Every one knew what that meant. Gold rattles, more or less valuable, are almost invariably found with funereal deposits. "These people," cried the alcalde, "have found a treasure belonging to the state, and have fled with it. I shall issue a warrant for their arrest." At this moment came Christina's husband. He heard the story in silence, offered no information, but went home and punched her.

That was the end of the tale, so far as they were interested in it. Needless to say that the pleasant confidence of man and wife never returned. In moments of annoyance, the loss of untold wealth was always charged against Christina; and her temper soured, his irritability grew, as years went on, without improving their con-

dition. I never yet knew a case of treasure-trove which did not work mischief.

Whilst this legend was telling our servants came in, and they heard the last of it.

"I know all about that woman," said Salvador. "Her name is Dolores Esparsa, and her husband is called Manuele Burgos."

"You are right!" cried the Indians together.

"They live at Masaya, and have a great hacienda by the Panaloya."

"So we have been told."

"The eldest son is a colonel, the second a rich lawyer, and the third is a canon at Rivas."

There was no reply to this. The pair listened breathlessly, and the old woman's eyes flamed with hate.

"They say," continued Salvador, "that one or other of the elder sons is likely to be president at the next election. If not, the colonel will 'pronounce.' The brothers are friends, and they don't care which is chosen. As for the youngest, he is to be bishop-coadjutor of Leon as soon as his holiness approves the appointment."

The Indian looked at his wife darkly. She sombrely surveyed her ugly nurselings, unwashed, unkempt, ignorant, hopeless, born serfs as their parents were, excepting the name. Then she rose, quite quietly, and went to bed, with a dull and pre-occupied salutation. The old

man followed, and we also turned in, to leave the place at dawn for a shooting expedition. Two days after, riding near Granada in the dusk, we passed an old woman whose face seemed familiar, but she paid no attention. Our servants entered into chat with her, and stayed behind. When Salvador overtook us, he said: "That was old Christina, in whose house we slept beneath Mombacho. I know what the witch has come to do," he added mysteriously; but we could get no information more explicit than shakings of the head and muttered exorcisms.

Next morning there was agitation on the Gran Plaza, and excitement among the priests of La Merced Church. The gaping idol called La Bocca, which stands, half embedded, at a corner of a square, was sprinkled with blood, and its huge mouth was full of flowers. The earliest duty of the verger at La Merced is to examine this figure, and with utmost haste to remove all outward evidence of the Paganism which still lingers in that country. He dares not, however, conceal his discovery when there is something new. For these offerings to La Bocca nearly always portend disturbance among the Indians. Upon the point of rising in arms, the serfs invoke their ancestral gods. Several times an energetic government has profited by the warning, and trouble has been averted by redress of peon grievances. Occasionally La Bocca is propitiated for private vengeance,

but this occurs so seldom that the other explanation is always preferred.

Salvador brought the news, with horror in his face. Desperate over her wrongs, Christina had given her soul to the fiends for revenge. "Something awful will happen!" he said. "If I were Colonel Burgos I would go to the hut, and burn her and all her family inside."

But we never heard the tragic issue. There was much talk of removing La Bocca, or blowing him up, as there always is after a scandal of this kind. The priests of La Merced, to whom the idol gives much annoyance and no profit, petitioned government to stop such displays of malignant heathenism. They offered to destroy the stone at their own expense. But government was afraid. Nobody can tell how the Indians would regard the uprooting of La Bocca. It was planted where it stands, they say, and it has been preserved by miracle. Little wonder that such a belief should rule, when every idol and statue for miles round has been upset or broken. So far as I know, La Bocca is still erect at the corner of the Great Square in Granada, and still, from time to time, its hideous crest is smeared with blood, and its mouth filled with flowers.

LEGEND ELEVENTH.

A CUP.

It is not a pretty nor a valuable object, and I use it for no loftier purpose than to store therein the ashes of my evening pipe. Yet I prize the thing more in its degree than that lovely silver goblet full of flowers, which stands beside it on the table. The one is exquisite Dehli work; the other is a rude attempt of some Persian blacksmith. But this has associations, and that has none. My ugly cup of sordid metal, decorated with childish scores and scratchings, was the property of Rahim Khan. Many a time I drained it in that long march across the desert. It recalls his image to me, and if you will I should like to discourse about the young Brahui chief who was our guide from Quetta down.

I travelled from Candahar, after the campaign, with Colonel H. Macleod, R.A. As Commissary-General of Ordnance to General Stewart's force this gentleman had taken up an enormous convoy of warlike stores—nine hundred loads, I think. In the Bolan Pass the Brahui chiefs had been most active and obliging in his service, and he rewarded the foremost of them with the gift of a re-

volver each. This liberality established a most satisfactory feeling, and Macleod was quite enthusiastic in his kindness for the robber chieftains. We had no real need of an escort beyond Quetta, so well did the Brahuis carry out their new obligation. It could not be said, of course, that there was no danger; for the Kakar Pathans held a bye-way leading into the pass at Much, and our troops stationed there were fired at with tolerable regularity. But Englishmen well-armed, riding in daylight, had no serious risk. It was pure liking for the Brahuis, and desire to see as much of them as possible, which induced Macleod to apply for two "Catch-'em-alive-ohs," as we called the ragged matchlock men.

The request was made to Mr. Bruce, political officer at Quetta, and was granted as a thing of course. Round the handsome mansion, which towers over dingy huts and water-ways like the seigneurial château above its village in pre-revolutionary France, a score of dhuni-wassals always loitered. Not so tall perhaps as the Pathans, Brahuis are strong and lithe. Their vigorous features have not the clear outline of the northern race, but also they have not the scowl nor the brutality of expression. Jet black hair, soft, and mostly curling, falls in a mass over chest and shoulders. These fellows sat about, watching the road, telling tales, examining each other's swords and weapons. The mares of the robber tribe, so famous in story, stood saddled in a shed,

with the shield and jezail of the owner. As for his sword, the Brahui never puts that aside.

One chief and a certain number of his retainers are always attending on Mr. Bruce; the service is paid. Their duty it is to mount at a word, and gallop, now carrying a letter into the mountains, now thundering after a gang of cattle-lifters, now tracking a murderer, or burning a den of Kakar cut-throats. Upon this day, as the Baboo clerk reported, Rahim Khan was the chief on guard. "You are lucky!" said Mr. Bruce. "This young fellow is a special pet of ours. Though possessed of neither wealth nor following, he has considerable influence." Presently the "Just Lord" entered, easy and smiling, touched his forehead gracefully with the palm of his right hand, and stood to take the order. I do not know that I have ever seen a woman so perfectly beautiful as this Brahui youth. One thought of Byron's description of the Apollo:

> In his delicate form a dream of Love
> Shaped by some solitary nymph, &c.

Mr. Bruce smiled at our surprise, and Macleod said, "Antinöus in a poshteen, by Jove!"

Rahim Khan's complexion was not darker than that of a Neapolitan—is not, I trust, since my acquaintance with him dates but two years back. His skin had that golden tone more frequent with Sikh girls than

elsewhere. Eyes, features, and expression were all so perfect as to silence criticism; one could only protest that such beauty is not fitting in a man. But his soft eyes, as he revealed to us smiling, and as the tribe confirms, look on battle and cruelty unmoved. His girlish hand was roughened by the sword-hilt. No hardier warrior, no more determined shikari, could be found in all that race of fighting Nimrods. He shot a pigeon for us at sixty yards with a bullet. With the face and the figure of Eros, Rahim is a chip of the old Brahui block; daring, indolent, ostentatious, honest yet fickle, lively, good-humoured, clearly apprehensive of his own interest, cunning to form a plan, and silent to carry it out. Not altogether a pretty character, you see. But, if it be remembered what manner of life his people have been leading for six hundred years, it will seem no little credit that worse cannot be said of them. Compare them for honesty and manliness with the Pathan. Observe that vices unspeakable, which prevail amongst all their neighbours, vanish at the Brahui frontier.

"You will take these gentlemen safely to Dadur," said Mr. Bruce in Hindustani.

"Yah Mohammad would kill me if anything happened to Colonel Macleod-sah'b," answered Rahim, smiling.

Yah Mohammad is eldest son of Allah-ood-dina Khan,

the great Brahui chief, now so old and war-worn that his heir has virtually succeeded.

"You know me then?" asked Macleod.

"Every Brahui knows the big Colonel-sah'b, who is Yah Mohammad's friend."

So it was settled, and we started in an hour. Rahim Khan took only one grizzled henchman, hard-featured and silent; just the type of squire one would give to a gay young knight who loves hard knocks, stolen kisses, and other people's property. The chief was a delightful companion. He spoke Hindustani with more fluency than correctness; but in two or three days Macleod could converse with him. Manners so simple, courteous, and elegant, I have seldom met. He was never familiar, never cross, never in the way, and never out of it. His loyalty and admiration for Yah Mohammad were pleasant to see. The ugly squat sabreur was his hero. If a question rose of strength and address in war, as it often did of course, this name always turned up. "In his youth," said Rahim, "Allah-ood-dina was as powerful as you, Colonel-sah'b;" but he admits that Yah Mohammad could have thrown him at his best day.

We talked of poetry and learning. "There's no Brahui has studied like Yah Mohammad," said Rahim.

I asked about the traditions of the race. "I know

nothing," observed the youth, "excepting that we are Khurds, and that our forefathers came from Alip and Damas. You must ask Yah Mohammad at Dadur. He knows everything about us." Unfortunately I had never time to make these inquiries. General Phayre has collected much curious lore concerning the Brahuis—how interested were we all to hear fragments of it, at the night-camp on the Dasht-i-be-Doulat, though the thermometer stood below zero! But I do not know that he has published anything. That they came from Aleppo and Damascus is scarcely to be doubted.

Yah Mohammad at this time was chasing some Kakar Pathans, who had fired at a sepoy in the defile, and shot his thumb off. With twenty-five retainers he rode three days' journey into the Kakar wilds, killed several of the guilty, burnt their village, and drove off some hundred head of cattle. Not a man nor an ox was lost in returning through that hive of wasps. I met the famous chief on the Dasht-i-be-Doulat, and again at Dadur. He gave me a thoroughbred greyhound of the Khelat breed, fawn-coloured, with long ears, almost white, hanging like floss silk nearly to his chest. To offer money in exchange would have been insult; but the chieftain let me know, by significant admiration of my glasses, what he expected in return. Yah Mohammad is very ugly, almost as broad as long, a loud, reckless, masterful brigand. No one can doubt his loyalty at present, and I think it

will be our own fault if the Brahuis ever turn against us. I carried his dog at vast expense and pains to Lahore, when, as I sadly recall, I presented it to Lady Colley, the wife of my dear friend and councillor, who fell at Majuba Hill.

Though Rahim never gave one to suspect that he was even conscious of his beauty, a man so intelligent could not have lived twenty-two years without observing that women's veils flew open at his approach, and husbands looked askew. When we entered the Bolan it was filled with Brahuis, hastening from their winter quarters on the Kuchi to the upland pastures. That was an extraordinary sight—a nation on the march, with wives and families, camels, horses, donkeys, sheep, oxen, in thousands. Had we been riding alone, Macleod and I, our journey's end would have seen us just as ignorant of the local feminine charms as did the beginning. Rahim Khan's presence saved us this humiliation. Veils fell before him in the most unaccountable manner, girls ran close up to us in sudden anxiety about a lamb or baby-camel. We did not misunderstand this agitation of the sex; but Rahim went modestly through the throng, glancing right and left, but staring at no one. So long and thick were his eye-lashes that damsels may have moaned their luck, thinking themselves unobserved.

But a little incident assured me that our Adonis was neither stupid nor shy. A family of the richer class

came along; the wives on donkey-back; the girls, the men, and slaves afoot, amidst a crush of animals. The women rode with their faces to the tail, as is the jealous Moslem fashion. Beside one donkey walked a fine young maid, wrapped about the head in a yellow shawl. The men in advance gave us a grave salaam, and the cavalcade filed by. When this girl came up to Rahim, she deliberately snatched off her veil, and stood to refold it, head bent, but eyes up-lifted saucily. Standing thus with her back to the elders, and keeping her head down, she probably hoped that the freak would pass unnoticed. But one of the wives gave her a vicious prod with the driving-stick, which caused that forward maiden to exclaim. If I know the look of envious spite, I saw it in the dame's eye. Rahim Khan turned suddenly and looked at me, laughing aloud with such shrewd humour that I knew henceforward what to think about his bashfulness. He could have told some pretty romances, I doubt not; but woman is a subject not to be so much as hinted at out yonder. Talking once of Allah-ood-dina's family, Rahim counted the numerous sons. At my request Macleod reluctantly asked how many daughters the old chief had. "I do not know," answered Rahim very coldly, and trotted off.

He rode a piebald mare of that thoroughbred stock only less famous than the Arab. Neither Brahui nor Belooch will ride a horse. Formerly they killed all

colts not wanted for the stud, but of late years a few have found their way into the market. Curiously enough, these are said to show little of that fine quality which distinguishes the mare. How this can be I do not understand; the Brahuis explain their partiality in another way. The habits of a brigand life, and of a warfare daring and desperate, but stealthy, amply account for it. Stallions neigh and fight and break away, warning an enemy, and endangering retreat. Geldings have not courage to gallop till they die. The mare is silent, docile, brave, and iron-limbed. With these wild people she takes in some sort the place we give to woman—a creature loved and respected, almost worshipped.

Rahim Khan would back his mare to do one hundred miles every other day for a month, or to do sixty miles daily for a time indefinite. From what one gathers, these would seem no extraordinary feats for a good Beloochi mare. The travelling place is an amble, covering perhaps eight miles the hour; but the gallop is fast and untiring. One might have thought that a vice so troublesome as shying would have become extinct in a breed of horses used for predatory war. But I have never seen an animal more annoying in this way than Rahim's mare. She would not go ten yards unless another horse went with her, bucking and jibbing like a mad thing. The chief never stirred in the saddle,

but, if I recognise the sound of curses in an unknown tongue, he accompanied each fierce blow of his rein-tags with a consignment of the steed's soul to Eblis. Yet the love between the two was pleasant to behold when we halted. Rahim said that if quite alone she travelled like a bird, and I doubt not he spoke truth; for she would never have answered his purpose otherwise.

Our young friend on his mare was a graceful sight. When we left Quetta he was dressed in the poshteen—the sheepskin coat which is the winter costume of Pathan, Brahui, and Belooch alike. The wool is turned inside, and the leather, stained yellow or brown, is prettily embroidered with cotton or silk of bright colours. Such garments were provided for our soldiers, as many as could be got, and in no army have I seen a uniform so martial and becoming as the short-sleeved poshteen over a scarlet tunic. Rahim wore a turban almost white, and his silken ringlets fell in masses artfully careless nearly to his waist. After a vigorous struggle with his mare, a push of the turban, and a hasty grasp on either temple, restored the chevelure to its customary grace. Wide white trousers, falling over a boot of yellow leather, completed his dress, with the loose purple scarf disposed in a new fashion every few minutes. A broad embroidered baldric crossed the chest, and its free end fell to the knee. Of his sword and gun Rahim was very proud. They were both of Damascus steel, tried in

generations of hard fighting. The blade, sharp as a razor, would cut through a rifle-barrel without losing edge—so its master said, at least, and he was anxious to bet. The jezail, or long gun, was of Persian manufacture, beautifully adorned with mother-of-pearl. The powder-flask and bullet-case, of leather embossed, hung with charms and curious instruments at his waist. When we reached the hot plain of Dadur, Rahim clothed himself with white linen, loose and flowing.

I do not think he had much religion. The Brahuis are no fanatics; I never heard of a ghazi among them, and their priests are not influential. At the same time, they keep the Moslem law and fasts, rigidly abstain from intoxicating liquors; and but few of them smoke. In practice they, like all other Mussulmans, have one wife only, though by theory they may have four at least. Woman is sacred in sack or foray. The greatest insult you can offer a Brahui is to ask: "Who killed the memsah'b?"—an allusion to the death of Mrs. Marsh in 1840. It is whispered that Allah-ood-dina himself was the culprit. Mrs. Marsh was riding up the Bolan in hat and habit; the Brahuis thought her a man.

At one of the halts I unpacked some carpets brought from Candahar. "I have one like that," said Rahim quietly, pointing to the finest.

"How did you get it?" we asked.

"Took it!" he answered, laughing loud. "Some

Pathan traders were coming down in a kafila so numerous and so bold that they determined not to pay Allah-ood-dina's dues; so we attacked them, and the carpet came to my share. We took so much fruit that our mares were fed on melons."

"And what became of the merchants?"

"They died," he answered with the sweetest of smiles.

Rahim's attendance should have ceased at Dadur, which is the frontier town of his tribe; but he begged us to let him see the fire-horses—the railway—at Sukkur, and we were glad of his company. For night marching through the desert, guides are desirable, if not necessary. Upon the stage to Bagh, none could be obtained; but Rahim suddenly announced that he would lead us.

"I thought," said Macleod, "you had never been beyond Dadur?"

"Well," he sedately replied, "it's a long time ago. I was only a lad; but Allah-ood-dina took me with him when he made war on the Khan of Khelat. We beat his soldiers at Dadur and Mustaing, and we burnt every town as far as Bagh. Then Major Sandeman interfered, and we went back. Oh, what fighting and what loot there was!"

"How old were you?"

"Not fifteen. It was after the sack of Bagh that Allah-ood-dina gave me my gun."

"Then you distinguished yourself?"

"Oh, I——." We did not hear the special feat which had merited reward. A shrewd look of distrust passed over his animated face, and he turned away laughing. One could read a sudden thought that it might be imprudent to tell these crotchety strangers everything.

I may mention an incident which shows the bright intelligence of the youth. We spoke of Plevna, the numbers on each side, and the heaps of dead. "Ah," said Rahim, "our wars are mean and paltry; but a man can only die!"

The young chief's hatred for the Khan of Khelat, who, in a very limited sense, is liege lord of these Brahuis, was evidently an absorbing passion. I shall not forget the little scene caused by Macleod's mischievous question, whether the Brahuis would make war upon the Khan if the Sircar gave them leave. Rahim pulled up his mare, and faced us with eyes that sparkled, stuttering in his impatience. By-the-bye, he told a quaint little story of one amongst the insults and injuries which drove Allah-ood-dina to arms. Attending on the Khan one day, when the talk fell upon sport, the Brahui chief declared that in a village of his country stood a pair of wild-sheep horns, which a man could creep through without bending his knees. The Belooch nobles ridiculed this statement, and Allah-ood-dina challenged them to send two trusty servants to report. They

did so, and, the men returning, said it was true. Whereupon the Khan observed that they were liars like Allah-ood-dina. The proud old chief fled to his hills that night, but was persuaded to return. The final rupture was caused by an attempt to poison him.

At Bagh our seductive young friend began to unroll his little combination, a harmless plot enough. Returning from a stroll in the dreary bazaar, he told us with repressed indignation that four Brahuis had been lying two months in the stocks. Through frost and rain and heat they had suffered torments mental and physical amongst a populace which bitterly hated all of their name. We went to see these unfortunates, and certainly their plight was rather bad. Two had served in the victorious army which looted Bagh seven years before, and they had been recognised. Since Captain Reynolds had ordered the Kotwal to detain them, their case was suspicious, no doubt; but two months in the stocks at the mercy of Belooch enemies is rather severe for an untried prisoner. Nothing could be done at Bagh, but on reaching Jacobabad I persuaded Captain Reynolds to let the accused go free on Rahim's bail. The document was written in English, and the chief put his seal thereto without asking for a translation. "I, Rahim Khan," it said, "Sirdar of the Brahui nation, do hold myself responsible in all I possess for the due appearance when summoned of ——, ——, ——, ——, Brahuis of

Allah-ood-dina's clan, now detained in the stocks at Bagh." I, who drew it up, do not know whether the phraseology was legal, but I do know that it will bind this honourable young fellow as fast as all the red-tape lawyers could twine round him.

The prisoners were grievously suspected of stealing two valuable boxes on their way to Mr. Bruce at Quetta. When he had secured their release, Rahim felt no more interest in the fire-horses at Sukkur. In an hour he had left us with adieus of perfect manly grace. Even Captain Reynolds, who has no cause to love these most troublesome of the lawless beings whom it is his fate to deal with, called him the prettiest-mannered tiger-cub of the frontier. It was a good description. One must not seek the merits of a lamb in the whelp of a tiger. Yet the wild beast may have his own good qualities, and I should be very loth to think that Rahim Khan is not honest in practising such virtues as his training suffers him to understand. If we left with him a feeling as kindly as he impressed on us, there is one steady friend of the English amongst the Brahui Sirdars.

When we parted, I begged of him the little cup which is now my ash-tray. It is actually valueless, and it cost me a sovereign. Gentilesse oblige.

LEGEND TWELFTH.

IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND.

Three days ago I returned to my cottage after nearly twelve months' absence in Eastern Europe. It is quaint and sunny—and damp—as always; the memorials of distant travel, whereof you have heard so much, welcome me home; the roses in my conservatory are as thick and as fragrant as ever. Time has flown lightly and pleasantly with home and owner, but in the big heap of letters on my table there is notice of change more than enough. I have reached the age when death becomes a household familiar, creeping close and closer round in a beat ever narrowing—striking here and there more rapidly and more nearly until oneself is struck. Four intimate friends have joined the majority since I left home; one, an old schoolfellow, who had never, I believe, visited more distant parts than France or Italy; the second, a French journalist, whose facile success proved his ruin; the third, an officer of Rajah Brooke's who died in the Red Sea on his way home; the fourth, a South African farmer, wine-grower, digger, veterinary surgeon—the best and the happiest of men. He, his

wife, and one of their children perished of fever within forty-eight hours. His executor writes to me of some business settled years ago;—but my friend was never careful of his papers.

We called him Swelly Dave upon "the Fields," where I first made his acquaintance. His real name matters to no one; let us suppose it Davies. Everyone liked and admired when they knew him, but in that rough place he had an up-hill road to popularity, for Dave was consumed by an instinct and a genius for dress. At all times he could display a white shirt and a stiff collar. This neatness was not an hereditary attribute I imagine. He confessed that his father had been a country vet., and that he himself had been educated for that modest profession. He had learned something of the business evidently, when his parents' death gave him a very little fortune. This he spent quite quietly and respectably, satisfied with the present and the future of humanity when his trousers fitted, and their pockets held a shilling for a flower.

It was not the dear old fellow's nature to run into debt. He reckoned up his waning cash with jealous integrity, and, when it had ebbed to a certain point, he paid his tailor, packed his wardrobe, and sailed for the Cape. There he practised as a vet. until the discovery of diamonds attracted him to Dutoitspan. He was lucky from the outset, and, as he neither drank nor

gambled beyond moderation, Dave was soon enabled to indulge his one extravagance. I found him established at Benning and Martin's "Hotel" on my arrival, a tall young fellow with sleepy brown eyes, and fair hair and moustache. We did not grow intimate for a long while, since his character was all that is least gushing. I have met only one European in the world who could sit still and keep silence as he could. On a shady bench outside the hotel door he would gaze dreamily at nothing from dinner-time till dusk. His pleasant smile was ready for an acquaintance, and his few words shrewd and purposeful enough, but he felt no need of a companion. At first the rude diggers resented alike the collars and the quiet, but when they found that this spic-and-span lounger was ready with his fists in a challenge—though he nearly always got the worst of an encounter—they respected him.

The incident which brought me into closer relationship with Dave took place after I had left Benning and Martin's to live on Bultfontein Hill. Let it be confessed at once that I have made a coherent story out of facts which could be, and were, summarised in two or three paragraphs of *The Diamond Fields News;* but the facts are perfectly true and notorious. If I transcribed those paragraphs you would cry out for detail and explanation; you would want to know more of the human beings concerned. Until this sad news reached me I could not

have satisfied you without an unpardonable breach of friendship. But all are gone now who were interested in those strange events, and when memory stirs my imagination there is no need to resist.

It was in the latter end of 1872. One morning I descended Bultfontein Hill to inspect the market. Half-a-dozen waggons just arrived stood round the square; heavy boers and ragged followers of the camp were transferring their contents to market-tables, ranged in a hollow parallelogram. The porters of the municipality, working inside this barrier, sorted and arranged the various "lots"—fruit, tobacco, vegetables, biltongue, and other products of the Free State and the Transvaal. The market-master, note-book in hand, strode to and fro upon the tables, entering, cataloguing, swearing, and stamping. At a distance stood a crowd of diggers, waiting to buy their stock of necessaries before descending to the claims. Few of them had washed; water was threepence a bucket—salt at that, and "fetch it yourself." A grimy throng they were, therefore, in patched clothes from which the colour had departed, white with dust, scarred with old wounds and boils, red-eyed and blinking, and disfigured by huge blue spectacles of the roughest make. They leaned on spades and picks and "sorting-boards," smoking rank tobacco and shouting rough jests.

Crossing the open space I met Swelly Dave, absorbed

in contemplation of a sack of oranges. "Have you been on the scoop?" I cried, taking his arm. "Your necktie is crooked and your collar broken."

"Don't, old fellow," he answered. "Louey has had a bad night, and they say there is no hope." His eyes were brimming; his voice hoarse.

I had heard of this poor girl, who was the beauty of Dutoitspan, in days before my arrival. For two months past she had been wasting with fever, caused rather by foul smells, heat, worry of flies, and bad food, than by disease. It was no secret that Dave loved her, but the girl was young and wilful, too giddy and too much courted to heed his rather shy devotion.

"She is dying of thirst," continued Dave, "and the brack water makes her sick. Every day for a week I have come to find oranges, but none arrived. The child shall have as many as I can carry to-day, if I pay a pound apiece for them."

I do not remember what they cost, but it was a price to startle the most reckless spendthrift; for other sick there were upon the Fields, and other devoted friends. We filled the sack which Dave had brought, and at his request I accompanied him to the wretched dwelling where Louey Parsons lay, with her father and sister. It stood in the worst part of the camp, where the irresponsible Kaffir ignored the Sanitary Commission. The air was sickly with a smell of garbage rotting in open

holes. Frowsy diggers, waking from a drunken spree, blinked at the sunshine, and coughed till they choked at the door of foul canteens. Shouting black men went by in gangs, some to work, others, their term of service ended, trooping towards the veldt. Two in three of these carried a gun, the product of their wages, and all had a bundle of miscellaneous loot. They bade farewell to distant comrades in a cry very musical, but very melancholy, and peculiarly distressing, as we knew, to invalids.

"This is a bad quarter for a sick person," I said.

"You should visit it at night," Dave answered bitterly. "I tell you, Parsons has killed my girl in sheer pride and obstinacy. Heaven knows how they have lived for the last few weeks! Parsons' claim is no good, and he'll not take help. And so little Loo is dying!"

Before a small frame house, stained and patched, sat a grey old man smoking. His face did not prepossess me, but so white it was with yesterday's dust that we could scarcely trace the features. His shirt-sleeves, rolled to the shoulder, displayed only skin and muscle. He watched us approach with dry and swollen eyes.

"I've found some oranges to-day," said Dave. "Can I see Miss Clara?"

"Louey's awake," was the short reply; and the old man rose from his seat of mud, shouldered his pick and shovel, and strode off.

Dave called softly at the ragged door:

"Miss Clara, shall I come in?"

"Come in, Dave! Come in, you silly old man!" cried a thin but cheerful voice.

He turned to me with hope shining in his eyes. "That's Louey!" he whispered.

After a moment, Dave called me, and I entered. There is no occasion to describe my visit. The child had no notion of her doom. She sat up in the miserable bed, supported tenderly by her sister, and ate the oranges with eagerness. The colour sprang to her wasted face, and her big eyes sparkled, as she laughed with Dave. But in two or three minutes the light faded suddenly, and Clara dismissed us. A very few days afterwards Louey died. Half the camp attended her funeral--every one who had known the bright and laughter-loving little maid.

Dave's grief was altogether silent and restrained. True to his instinct, no outward sign showed the despair within. But, after some two or three months, he quietly began to realise his fortune, and to talk of returning home, not for a permanency, but for a long visit. Meanwhile, the funeral had utterly exhausted Parsons' resources. But the man's hardness of nature forbade him to ask help, until he and his surviving daughter actually starved. Then he accepted a proposal carefully framed in a manner to spare his pride.

For five hundred pounds Dave sold to him one-half of the best claims he had, the money to be paid out of profits. The other half Parsons was to work in their joint interest, taking a moiety of the yield after paying expenses. Such agreements were and are usual. Dave's house also he took at a low value. The transfer duly registered, our friend left for home. I accompanied him on the voyage, and in England our intimacy grew. I loved the dear old fellow.

With the utmost composure he watched his second fortune vanish in follies more expensive than dress, and at the end of two years he bade me farewell. I have never seen him since, for he did not return to England. The events that follow were told me by a friend, who regarded Dave almost as warmly as I myself did. I put his narrative into the first person for convenience.

Parsons had extraordinary luck at last. In less than three months he had remitted the full amount due for house and half-claim. But he turned out to be one of the most objectionable diggers in camp, always foremost in making grievances against authority. That was an agitated time. Nothing had been settled as yet, beyond the transfer of Griqualand to the British Empire. The Commissioners might, perhaps, be bullied or persuaded to any action, and "diggers' meetings" assembled almost nightly for the purpose of trying it on. Parsons became

a leading orator at these gatherings, spouting seditious nonsense from the market-table.

Nor did the surviving daughter much impress me, said my informant. Beauty she had beyond doubt, of a higher class, I should fancy, than those young charms which fascinated poor Swelly Dave. Her features were delicate and high-bred, her eyes full of life, but, I thought, hard. One could not mistake her neat upright little figure at any distance. I recognised it in the Main Street one day, as I drove from New Rush home.

Miss Parsons had been shopping, and I overtook her at Michaelis's store. Many a stalwart young digger, trudging dirty from the claims with his spade upon his shoulder, gave me a jealous glance as he dived out of sight between the huts.

"So Dave is coming back?" I said, as we strolled along.

"I didn't know," she answered coolly. "He makes a mistake. The diggings are not what they were."

"Perhaps Dave is not what he was."

"Oh, Mr. Dave will never change. He lives in a bandbox, and nothing can affect him."

"You think that he did not feel your sister's death much? I can assure you that is a grave mistake."

Miss Parsons' face changed.

"He suffered what he could, no doubt. A few tears

leaked through the box. You are Mr. Dave's great friend, are you not?"

"No. He is very dear to me, but there are others in the camp who have known him longer and tried him more."

"Why," she cried, her clear eyes shining with anger, "you speak of this—this Mr. Dave as one would speak of a hero! It is ridiculous!"

"And how does your father speak of him, Miss Parsons?" I asked, stopping at her door. She looked at me like a little fury, and went in.

In due time Dave arrived, hot and dusty, but otherwise the same. His friends had arranged a dinner to welcome him, and "the proceedings terminated," as the sacred formula runs, at a very late hour indeed. Next day he called on Mr. Parsons, frankly told his situation, and asked for the accounts of his quarter interest. That wretch pretended not to understand, produced the transfer, and accused Dave of an attempt to swindle. The poor fellow did not answer much, and did nothing to obtain his rights. Louey's father was sacred. He told me the story with his usual calmness.

"It doesn't make much difference," he said; "I shall have to begin afresh. Perhaps some one will put me into a claim."

But of his old friends, some had retired on their fortune; others, disheartened, had gone farther north, to the gold diggings; others had withdrawn to different

pursuits. Those remaining nearly all owned good claims, but their arrangements were permanently settled. People on whom Dave had not such strong hold were disinclined to tempt their luck by employing a man once successful. For there is a superstition in the Fields, confirmed by a dozen cases in my own experience, that the digger has only one chance. If he trifle with it, or let it go, Fate takes revenge.

There were many claims "jumpable" on Dutoitspan and Bultfontein, and one of these Dave worked, cheerful and quiet; but his finds were absolutely nothing. He lived in my tent on Bultfontein Hill. At his request, I did not speak of Parsons' conduct. The daughter I noticed only by a ceremonious bow when I chanced to meet her. But we came face to face one afternoon, and I could do no less in public than grasp the offered hand.

"Did I not say," she began, "that Mr. Dave had better not have returned?"

"You spoke with more knowledge of the facts than I had."

"I? How?"

The girl's impudence vexed me. "You have proved yourself a wise child, Miss Parsons," I answered, "if there's truth in the proverb." She coloured angrily, and stared, but I left her.

This incident I told to Dave, of course, as we sat at

night. "I should be sorry to suspect Clara," he said, "of any part in her father's conduct. We were never friends, but I used to think her as honest as high-spirited. How she loved little Loo! Her dislike for me arose from jealousy of the child's friendship, though, Heaven knows, Loo never pretended to care for me. Old fellow, I'm tired of this place! Will Palmer has asked me to join him, prospecting beyond the Hoek, and I've accepted. We start to morrow."

"It's hard on two of our oldest voor-trekkers to be inspanning again!"

"Read up your history of Christopher Columbus," he answered, laughing. "That voor-trekker was ill-treated if you like."

Two days after, the pair started amidst some excitement; for a "prospecting expedition" had not left the Fields these many months past, and both men were popular. I saw Miss Parsons at her door as the noisy little crowd went by. She knew by experience what that procession signified—the pony laden with tent and tools and cooking things, the men with rifle, revolver, and pannikin. Dave was neat as usual, and excellently dressed, though not in Pall Mall fashion. The wife of an official had just presented him with a superb white ostrich feather, which he had curled round his broad brimmed hat. He raised it in passing, and the girl coloured.

Our first news of the explorers came from the store-

keeper at the Hoek. He wrote that they had crossed the river, against urgent warning. The chief Jantje and his Batlapins had lately become more offensive than usual, and my friend the storekeeper expected mischief. After this, nothing more was heard of Dave for nearly two months. We vaguely knew at the Fields that Jantje had broken out, and was doing much injury to his neighbours. But there are or were no white people in his territory, and the Orange River is very broad. Half a troop of the Frontier Police marched to the Hoek, for what purpose nobody knew. The friends of the "prospectors" grew anxious.

Meanwhile another attack of their periodical fever had broken out among the diggers. New Rush discovered, all over again, that it was robbed by black labourers and white receivers. For the hundredth time it vowed in public and private that this sort of thing must be stopped with fire and blood. So the diggers assembled in their thousands, burnt half-a-dozen canteens, and badly treated their owners. Then they caught some blacks, flogged them, and marched them about with ropes round their necks, looking for a tree. In fact, the usual symptoms displayed themselves, and the usual result arrived. Our steady, hard-working camp took the disease in milder form; for we, who habitually looked after our own claims, had not so much to fear from theft.

Parsons made himself foremost in denouncing buyers of stolen gems. He raved upon the market-table nightly, to such effect that our peaceful diggers suddenly rose, without concert apparent, and burnt a suttler's house, just as if they had been rowdy swells of the Colesberg Kopje. No evidence was brought against the accused, at least in public, but it was well he did not fall into the avenger's hands. Be it observed, however, that his guilt was probable enough.

Whilst I stood in the excited crowd, which disputed who should next be punished, a familiar voice hailed me above the din. I looked round, and saw Dave and Palmer on horseback, with three armed and mounted blacks. The white men's clothes were rags, their faces thin and travel-worn, but they looked pictures of health.

"Come along," cried Dave gaily; "I must lodge a man in the tronc, and then we'll have such a palaver! Who is he? My prisoner, bless him! The trophy of my bow and spear. It's the same old game here? Burning canteens, I suppose? Egad, I come at an opportune moment!"

The prisoner was a huge Batlapin, who, as he walked hidden by the mounted men, whined hymns. He was deposited at the tronc, upon explanation with the sergeant, and the others came with us home.

"Glorious chaps, these!" laughed Dave. "Two are

Griquas and the other a Basuto. I say, Palmer, which of us is which?"

"You're a Basuto, and I'm a Griqua."

"What a memory you have! I shall never recollect until they allot me my wives. Do you understand, old fellow? We're chiefs, Will and I, promoted on the field of honour, when we smote Jantje hip and thigh, whilst you were groping for pebbles in a lime-kiln."

Certainly Dave was changed at last. The bath of excitement and action agreed with his constitution. Bright he had always been when roused for a moment, but languid and dreamy in general. Now he busied himself to make the negroes comfortable, and they regarded him with a smile of admiring affection.

When horses and men had been disposed of for the night, and our rough supper finished, the pair told me their adventures, which I must summarise briefly.

After crossing the Orange, they found themselves environed by rumours and dire alarms. There is a small colony of Basuto Kaffirs opposite the Hoek, rich and prosperous by the sale of diamonds honestly obtained. This is the clan of John Katlands, of whom I discoursed in another legend. These good fellows urged them not to proceed, for the Batlapins were on the war-path. But Dave and his comrade would not be scared. That Jantje would dare ill-use white men seemed ridiculous, and they expected much more amuse-

ment than danger in witnessing the campaign. The good Basuto chief gave them horses and a half-dozen of picked warriors to guard them and report.

Thus reinforced, and secure of food, they abandoned the project of halting at Campbell Grounds, where, in truth, they had nothing to do. Pushing straight on over the veldt, they beheld signs of trouble before reaching the first halt. The Griquas had sent away their old men, women, and children, with such household gear and cattle as could be rescued. A train of waggons streamed towards the Orange River. The fugitives named a place where the men capable of bearing arms had appointed their rendezvous, but the Basutos did not know the spot, nor could understand how to find it.

On the third march from the river, they saw burnt homesteads, dead cattle, and the signs of barbarous war. Now and then a small body of negroes would be discovered upon the naked veldt, but so far away that to pursue them was hopeless. Next day, however, they met a plundering party of the enemy, who stood; and for the first time Dave heard the singing of a bullet. Two Batlapins were killed and one taken, who saved his life by guiding them to the Griqua rendezvous.

A distressing scene of confusion was that laager. The Griquas, brave enough, had lived for years in a peace profound. They had no war-chiefs, and not a man

among them knew what ought to be done. The strangers were received with unspeakable delight, and they found apt pupils. Hottentot blood is scarcely less capable of training for war of its own style than is the perfervidum ingenium of the Kaffir. Within a few days a successful foray was conducted into Jantje's country, and both parties discovered that Batlapin kraals are as easy to burn as Griqua farmsteads.

Thus a guerilla war began, whilst Jantje collected his power, and strove to drag Monkoroane, chief of the Corannas, into the dangerous game. Weeks passed by, the Griquas gaining confidence in themselves and their leaders. At length Jantje moved with all his followers. Scouts and prisoners gave timely notice, and the white generals secured a formidable contingent of Basutos, led by the old chief himself. After a desultory fight, which lasted half the day, Dave charged at the head of his cavalry. The Batlapins ran, and Jantje took refuge among the Corannas, where he remained until later events tempted him to renew his senseless schemes (1879-80). No prisoners were taken, of course, excepting the man just lodged in the tronc, who saved his life by offering handfuls of coin.

Such was Dave's story. The gratitude and admiration of the negroes were not satisfied with conferring on their generals the barren honour of chieftainship. A subscription was organised, which took the form of

cattle. Upon the hint that diamonds would be a kind of wealth more portable, two handfuls of fine stones, worth over fifteen hundred pounds, were substituted. And with this booty and their Batlapin captive the pair returned to Dutoitspan.

Next day the prisoner was examined privately at the tronc. In answer to the magistrate, he repeated his confession that he had stolen many gems and sold them. He named his master, whose claim lay at New Rush, and that gentleman, when summoned, recognised him at a glance. It remained only to identify the buyer, a process needing the extremest caution. At nightfall we went out, with twelve constables in plain clothes, who strolled along in groups, disguised in an air of unconcern. Dave's black warriors marched arm-in-arm with the prisoner. He led us through the dirtiest and lowest quarters of the camp, and stopped at a distance from Parsons' old frame-house, which you remember. Parsons had left it long ago, and it was now a canteen. Through the open doorway we saw a rude bar covered with the filthiest glasses and bottles. A small cask of pontak, another of Cape smoke, and a basket of ginger-beer stood on a shelf—the usual array of poisons. One tallow candle lit the dreary den, and shone dimly through the walls of canvas. Behind the bar stood a pale, unwholesome-looking man, and two examples of the lowest class of digger lounged on rough settles, smoking.

In two minutes the "surround" was complete, and the constables closing in almost touched each other in their circle. Then the sergeant stepped into the brighter ray of light thrown by the open doorway, exclaiming, "No resistance, Corny! You're my prisoner!" His pistol was drawn as he spoke. I have not seen fear so suddenly and awfully expressed as in that fellow's face. His jaw dropped, his eyebrows rose, cold sweat streamed down and glistened in the candlelight. He did not say a word nor move, but the guests made row enough. They crushed back to defend themselves, shouting to their "brother diggers." I saw a quick gleam in the barman's glassy eye; the candlestick rattled on the ground, and all was dark. Before the sergeant could flash his lantern, a cheery voice cried outside, "All right, sir! We've got Corny, a-creepin' among the tent-pegs, he was!"

The barkeeper and his friends were led through a gathering crowd, which fought for the privilege of murdering them, so soon as the charge was known. We did our duty in protecting the frightened wretches, and then turned homewards. I saw that the suspicion in my own mind was agitating Dave, and we threaded our way silently through the labyrinth of claims. Arrived at home, seated with grog and pipe before the door, Dave rose suddenly, exclaiming, "I should have stayed. You won't sit up for me, old man?"

"I'll go back with you. There may be a row."

After a few yards, Dave said, "It's no use making mysteries. What do you suspect?"

"That Parsons was running that canteen, and that there's no time to lose, if you wish to warn him. But why protect the scoundrel, and risk your own life! He's one of the most finished blackguards on the Fields, and a mean hypocrite besides."

"I can't help that! Let us run!"

We reached the house breathless. The night was very dark, the street quiet, and we stole towards the door. Dave had raised his hand to tap, when it was seized. "None of that," whispered the sergeant; and he led us quietly beyond earshot of those within. "I somehow guessed what your little game might be, Dave. Now, Parsons is bound to be took, but we don't want a row with the girl."

"What is the charge?" I asked.

"None yet. I'm waiting for the warrant."

"Then why should we not enter?"

"Because those are my orders. There may be documents and things. Ah! here comes the man I'm looking for! Now, mind, we're in the thick of the camp here, and if you make a row the old chap's life's not worth a chip of bort."

This was evident, and we drew aside. A neatly-dressed black, carrying a lantern, exchanged a word with

the sergeant, tapped at the door, and handed in a note. A moment afterwards Clara appeared, and walked away with him.

"Mrs. G. has sent for her," muttered the policeman. "That's a signal that the warrant's issued."

There was nothing to be done but watch. Presently arrived G. himself, the magistrate. He knocked at the door, the sergeant and I behind him, for "I have not the courage," whispered Dave. Parsons opened it, and we walked in. This living-room was just as Dave left it; the pictures, books, tablecloth, lamp, all familiar. Beside the stove stood Parsons, silent, looking keenly at G.

"I have an unpleasant duty," said the latter, in consecrated form. "Corny van Riet is charged with buying stolen diamonds, and I see sufficient cause for issuing a warrant against you."

Parsons was quite cool.

"Who accuses me?" he asked in a firm voice.

"No one. But to-morrow, or to-night, you will have five thousand accusers; and you know them."

"I have a right to ask why you suspect me?"

"Because I have reason to believe that Corny van Riet's canteen is yours. I may tell you that the police have been watching that place some time."

"Does Corny van Riet incriminate me?"

"Not yet. I take the responsibility of arresting you

as much for your own safety as for any other reason. Give me your keys, and go quietly."

The old man steadily walked out with the sergeant, asking no questions about Clara. G. told us that his wife had undertaken to break the matter, and to keep the girl all night. Then he sat down with his clerk to examine papers. I rejoined Dave, and we went home.

Next morning, very early, a note from G. was delivered begging us to attend on him. We found huge excitement at the Pan—Parsons had strangled himself in the night. G. received us gravely, and produced a letter found on the prisoner's table addressed to Dave. It acknowledged his dishonesty in the matter of the claim, and declared that the vengeance of heaven, so strangely and secretly pursuing his crime, had driven him to suicide. Had he not cheated Dave, this course of events would not have followed. A note of hand for the exact sum due was inclosed, and, as compensation, he left the whole claim to the man he had wronged. In a very brief farewell to his daughter, she was commanded to honour this last wish.

Whilst we talked, Clara came in. Her very lips were pale, but her eyes glowed. G. whispered hastily:

"She does not know the end!"

Advancing straight to Dave, the girl stood before him rigid with deep passion.

"Why do you persecute my father?" she said. "If

you had loved Louey, you would have been kind to us for her sake. He has done you no harm. Is it because you hate me, that you try to ruin him? I did not do you an ill-turn with Louey. If I had wished, she loved me better than you, and she would never have seen you again. Is it because my father has kept the money which you would have spent like a fool?——"

"Miss Parsons," said G. interfering, "you are under a mistake. Mr. Davies does not persecute your father. He could not know to whom the prisoner who fell into his hands by chance would point as the receiver of stolen diamonds. And it would be more merciful at once to say that your father has confessed, not only the crime charged against him, but another also, committed to the great injury of Mr. Davies himself, which Mr. Davies had nobly concealed"

The girl looked from one to the other in amaze.

"Confessed? Is this true, Mr. Dave?"

"Yes, it is true."

After a pause she bowed and said:

"I humbly beg your pardon, sir," and went out.

I had heard nothing of these events, when, nearly two years afterwards, I received a pair of wedding-cards —they are old-fashioned at the Cape. The dear friend whom we called "Swelly Dave" announced his marriage with Miss Clara Parsons. And within four years more both are gone.

LEGEND THIRTEENTH.

A MONTENEGRIN STRUKA.

In its early days the Naval Demonstration was not dull at all. Hundreds of good fellows, young and old, belonging to six nationalities, were impatient to make acquaintance and to entertain each other. At every moment of the day some new thing occurred to furnish gossip, and every half-hour "the cannon thundered and the people wondered." Then the Russians gave a banquet, and the Austrians a ball, so splendid that the supper and the ice, even the band and the ladies, were brought all the way from Trieste. The gallant Temeraires responded with a rival dance, and when it grew evident there must be a lack of partners, not to be outdone by Trieste, they dressed the ship's boys in petticoats —so scandal whispered. After that, the circuit of international hospitality was completed, and, when these cheery fellows had got through the round, they began it over again. Then the bay of Ragusa is pretty, and the town a marvel of quaintness. I say it was all very pleasant at first, and I finally deserted before set in that agony of dullness, discontent, self-mockery, and disgust

of all things which for long weeks made the "Demonstrators" miserable.

I had been dining one night with the Admiral, when Captain S. related his most interesting experiences of Albania and Montenegro. Rowing back over the moonlit bay, the inclination seized me to behold these countries for myself, and in two days' time I landed at Pristan-Antivari. Residence there has few charms. Seven houses stare at the empty roadstead. There was once an eighth, but it mysteriously blew up one night when the Prince of Montenegro had his head-quarters therein. Nobody of consequence perished, however. Behind, across a feverish and marshy flat, the ancient town of Antivari stands upon a rocky shoulder of the hills. It was a fine city once; now a white heap of ruins. Palaces and monuments—Slav, Venetian, Turk; mosques and minarets, churches, baths, and forts, lie tossed and piled, a labyrinth of dilapidation. I have seen nowhere such utter smash. The Montenegrin bombardment is credited with this result, but I fancy those grand buidings, bearing scutcheons and tablets above their marble doors, must have fallen partly at an earlier day.

Over Antivari, ridge above ridge, the mountains of Tchernagora heave upward, huge reefs of stone, naked and savage, cleft and riven, dark with clouds that sweep across their shoulders, or pallidly glimmering in the

sunlight. There is Kaliman, where the Albanians lie; there, the black crest of Sutormans, where waits the army of Montenegro. I knew the name of every hill in sight eight months ago.

A droll residence is Pristan-Antivari, but I don't advise the summer tourist to call there. Ragusa is a feverish spot, Heaven knows, but if the inhabitants had to choose betwixt an earthquake and emigration hither, like Mark Twain, they "would take their chances on the earthquake." It boasts, however, a room to let, with a bedstead of bullock's hide and a blanket thereon, a chair, a table, and half the carcass of a sheep suspended from a beam. I appropriated this chamber. At all hours of the twenty-four my landlord entered without apology to cut a chop from the gory skeleton; or he sent his little serving-boy.

This child was very pretty of face, and delicate in his ways, like a girl; but his eyes, enlarged by fever, had a wolfish keenness. His dress visible was a pair of ragged drawers and a long coat of sacking, which he held together with one hand, whatever his occupation. I suspect there was nothing underneath, except the long dag stuck in his waistband, which he produced occasionally. A very odd child. He went about his work or lounged in the doorway, silent for hours together; then of a sudden he would break into wild and unhealthy gaiety.

It was my good fortune to land at a moment when

two thousand soldiers had descended from Sutormans to clear out the accumulating stores of food which their irregular transport system could not get under. The officers, fourteen of them, were supping at my landlord's house, and he, enterprising man, had opened a canteen for the rank and file. Very pleasant, simple, quiet gentlemen were these chiefs, not one of whom could speak any language but his own, nor could write that, probably. The Montenegrin race is distinctly fair, but these, young and old, had skins of parchment texture, burnt and creased and weather-beaten with hard service.

A striking series were their faces for an artist seeking types of martial virtue. He would probably have made a special note of Buko Payevitch, Commandant of Antivari, not unknown to Europe. He was minister at Constantinople when the war began, and we heard plenty of his doings in 1876-7. I fear that this model of a soldier eats with his knife, or even with his fingers. I frankly admit he is too partial to onions. But his manly face, his eye yellow and keen like an eagle's, the very toss of his loose hair, delight an artistic soul by their perfection of finish, unconscious and native-born. Though not tall amidst that giant race, the commandant's superb bearing gives him a lofty air. There is fearless resolution and concentrated pride in his look. His manner could not be surpassed for graceful ease and dignity, his un-

studied attitudes are always striking, and his rare gestures have a martial force that contrasts with the meaningless gymnastics of Greek and Italian. Don't suppose, from this warm description, that I am a Slavophil, or one of those bamboozled by the "Christian hero" theory; the case is just otherwise. But I love beauty and bravery, wherever found.

I doubt that Buko Payevitch had but one suit of clothes, though of pistols, swords, and daggers he could make a thorough change seven times a week. When I visited him, he was always dressed in a red waistcoat, double-breasted, finely embroidered with black braid, and sleeved; over this, a jacket of the same, with ornamental sleeves cut loose from the shoulder, and hanging behind; red sash of Broussa silk, half covered by the weapon-belt, which showed a revolver, a silver-handled knife, an Albanian sword of exquisite workmanship, both blade and silver hilt, and an ornamental silver ramrod, carried for show and custom since it is useless now. His baggy breeches were blue, gartered below the knee with a ribband of gold embroidery; his cotton socks worn outside his white gaiters, and he had strong European boots. Most of the other waywodes and subalterns wore a dress like this, but some had the long white coat of cloth, girt at the waist with a scarf of brilliant colour, which is the costume of the court, and is reckoned national. All except Buko had gold lace inches deep—

four to six inches I mean—on waistcoat and sleeves; all carried a stomach-load of pistols, swords, and daggers. These are a simple article of dress out yonder. The beggar who asks alms wears a pistol and a knife—if not three or four—some of them antique weapons, valuable not for their fine workmanship alone. My landlord served the daily chops—we had actually no vegetables at Pristan-Antivari, nor fish, nor eggs, nor poultry—with two silver-mounted pistols sticking out before him. The commandant of our battery yielded to no man living in the elegance of his assorted arsenal, nor, for that matter, in the depth and variety of his gold lace. Even the telegraph clerk sported a revolver night and day. An amusing fellow was the telegraph clerk. I found that he could not perform that simple exercise called multiplication. He circumvented a problem of the sort by adding the figures together as many times as was necessary.

The officers received me with a dignified but hospitable welcome, but, as none of them could speak a foreign tongue, I shortly quitted the murky den redolent of onions and strong tobacco. Those "Christian heroes" lounging outside were more attractive. In grey-brown suits of country cloth once white, unshorn, red with the summer heats and black with dirt, they stalked to and fro, draped in heavy shawls, with a long fringe dangling, much like a tribe of nomad

Asiatics on a halt. I did not hear an angry word amongst them, but much laughter and much rude fun; I take it that the habit of carrying arms has a sobering effect on temper. They rushed the canteen, emptying mine host's medicine chest of liquors in two motions of the hand; but they resolutely refused to pay. Furthermore they broke down the fence of the port pilot's garden, ate his tomatos green, and his cherished gourd; tramped through a little flower-bed before the portals of the Austrian Lloyd, and some of them went to sleep thereon. There is no more mischief to record; for that matter, Puck himself would needs be idle in Pristan-Antivari. Then they found a heap of Turkish cannon-balls and empty shells, which they hurled about in highland fashion. From time to time a fresh store of biscuit-sacks, or sides of bacon, was consigned to them from the warehouse—a larger hut; one hundred and twenty pounds weight was every load, but cheerfully and manfully they tackled it, setting forth in pairs for a fifteen miles climb, though dusk was settling down. Next day, I passed nearly all of those poor fellows on the mountain side, weary but unconquered, struggling upwards still, cheering each other with long-drawn halloos that echoed from height to height. Truly the Montenegrins are savages, whatever definition we accept for that term. They are not handsome—in the lower class—dirty beyond belief, rough in manner, and cer-

tainly not obliging to the stranger in small things. But when one remarks their intelligence, their pride of independence, their bravery and resolution, one admits that they form a type of savage from whom we at this day might take example in such matters.

Many hundreds of beautiful and valuable weapons I examined that day, for which such sums were asked as showed that the owner set his life upon his sword. But it was the national plaid which more particularly roused my desire. The Montenegrin has neither taste nor skill. Like all Slavs, he is naturally destitute of a sense for the beautiful. Every object I coveted was a trophy of war, reft from the Albanian, that most artistic, most original of handicraftsmen in Europe. Every Skipetar seems to possess the fancy to devise, the eye to judge, and the hand to execute whatever he wants, with charming taste and originality. He leaves no instrument or object in its naked form of utility, and whatever he touches he adorns. This is high praise, but deserved.

The Albanian stands solitary in Europe, a survival of days when the Beautiful was the Good. In his stately perfection of manhood, his lordly gait, his martial dress, severe and chaste for all his wealth of colour; in the quaint elegance of his handiwork, in his headlong valour, stern resolution, and mastery of the diplomatic art; in his manners, so easy, frank, courteous, self-

respecting, and considerate; briefly, in all he does and looks the Albanian gentleman is a study. It is the Ghegghe's boast, which his bitterest enemies grudgingly concede, that he does not know what lying is, nor theft, nor treachery. And such a people is to be crushed by heavy Montenegrin and swindling, bullying Greek! The Tosk tribes, indeed, the Southerners, have not quite the same high character as have their uncorrupted brethren of the North. They—but this is not a tale of Albania; I must get back. But before returning to my subject, having said so much, I should add that trustworthy informants declare the Vlack, Wallach, or Roumanian races of that part, to be scarcely the inferiors of the Skipetar in artistic feeling or power of execution, though less noble in other respects. I am inclined to credit this statement, but I have no personal experience in the matter.

To return at length. The only object of native manufacture which I remarked among these Montenegrins, the only thing worth purchase, was the plaid or shawl. I have one before me. It is woven of black wool, eight feet long or more, by three feet wide. The material is so closely wrought that it feels rough and hard, like very heavy frieze. At either end hangs a thick fringe, sixteen inches long. The only ornament is four short bars of colour, red, yellow, blue, and green, penetrating some four inches into the stuff on either side

at each extremity. This plaid is called a "struka," and it is the single article of dress which a Montenegrin possesses wholly original; for all the various forms of jacket, waistcoat, coat, breeches, and cap, though they be claimed as national, are really imitations of the Ghegghe Albanian dress, as the Greek fustanella and gaiters are stolen without any change at all from the Tosk Albanian further south. I would not hastily decide which is the more artistic of these costumes. The Tosk is gorgeous and picturesque, even theatrical; but the Ghegghe has a virile severity not less impressive. If Montenegrin or Greek had once a national fashion, it has wholly disappeared, saving only, in the first case, the struka. I determined to buy one, but certainly not one that had ever touched a Christian hero's shoulders.

At eleven a.m. next day, after waiting five hours for my horses, I rode up that terrible hill, on the very crown of which, amongst oak copses dank with clouds, and tangled dells of arbutus and myrtle, the Montenegrin army was encamped. You have heard all about that strange scene. Two days later I went on to Cettinje, the capital. Immediately on leaving Sutormans, one sees the last of that fine road which the prince is constructing from end to end and side to side of his dominions. My track henceforth is the bed of a mountain torrent, pitching headlong downwards, or it slides over an incline of polished rock, or it loses itself in a bed

of jagged pebbles, left by an avalanche or a landslip. Nobody can tell of what horses are capable in the way of climbing who has not traversed such paths as these. In very many parts one had to go afoot a mile or two. General Bozo Petrovich had given me an orderly to ensure proper attention on the road. This excellent warrior understood his duties, and fulfilled them conscientiously. The moment I alighted, he gripped my arm with hooks of animated steel, and led me on. I shook off the unnecessary aid with signs of acknowledgment, and Nicolo Kaloudjarovitch eyed me for a moment with a grin suggestive of patronage, delight, and affectionate regard, such as one gives a child precociously successful in the art of walking. But, when he had thus gratified my conceit, he returned to duty with the air of a man not to be trifled with. The vice closed on my arm with increasing severity each time I threw it off, and I foresaw the moment when he would knock me down in sheer regard for my welfare.

The view that opens inland, when the scrub and brush of Sutormans are left behind, is paralleled nowhere in my experience of the world. One looks over a tangle, a rabble of hills, thick as bubbles in a boiling pot, faint of colour in the declining sun, misty of shadow. Scarcely one of them is clothed in verdure. Naked as a flint, they stretch themselves to Heaven, as far as one can see, with narrow green valleys winding beneath them. After

four hours' ride, Vier came in sight, far below, upon the shores of a great lake which shone like silver. But there are many ugly precipices to skirt before reaching it, and we crossed the ancient bridge after darkness had fallen. The Commandant, warned by Bozo Petrovitch, was waiting. He had secured me quarters, and I remember what a delicious meal of country fare he set before me. Vier-Bazaar deserves an article to itself, but next morning at daylight I was travelling again. Beautiful is the lake of Scutari, a sheet of water thirty miles long by twelve broad. The hills round it, low but steep, are mostly clad in brush, or in the grey tones of wormwood, but lonely and silent as the stern giants at their back. Stretched in a boat of shape unchanged since Roman times, eating grapes and smoking, whilst half-a-dozen heroes, be-pistolled and be-daggered, stand to row, facing the bows, one sees a lovely panorama. Jackdaws croak and call overhead, swallows dip, snow-white paddy-birds and grey herons rise on heavy wing amongst the reeds. The shallower water is thick with lily leaves, with here and there a lingering blossom, and here and there a small green frog outstretched upon the floating disc, too deeply reflective on the naval demonstration to heed our oars. A charming plant is there also, the water-chestnut, so much eaten in India; I did not know it was found in Europe. It floats upon the surface, a cluster of spade-shaped leaves always regular

in their disposition, the mass anchored by a slender cable. As we pass, Nicolo snatches at these vegetable mops, drags them aboard, and from underneath the leaves tears off the fruit and peels it. Very good fruit too, as all Indians are aware, a chestnut with the taste of filberts.

So we get to Rieca, and then, after lunch, take horse again. The road is better than that of yesterday, but certainly not less alarming to the nervous; I mean, that there are even more stretches there, and longer, where a false step would be certain death. In the afternoon, from the side of a ponderous mountain, which for an hour we have been working round, Cettinje breaks into sight, a prim village of low white houses, red-roofed, green-shuttered, set in the midst of a tiny valley, green and smooth as a meadow. Nothing could be less like the capital one would have fancied for warrior Montenegro; but you have all read descriptions of it. I rode at once to the inn, an establishment excellently conducted, though its resources be primitive, under the watchful eye of government. Sitting behind a jug of beer, well earned, I watched the humours of the street. The appearance and the disposition of houses in Cettinje are prosaic as could be, but its little court displays an amount of picturesque finery beyond proportion with its size. A number of officers, waywodes, and officials are always strolling between the modest palace and the hotel, where is found a billiard table! and a group of idlers

always ready to gossip. They wear a long white coat, of which the sleeves and skirts alone are visible. Outside this is a scarlet jacket, profusely trimmed in front with gilded tags, and behind with as much gold embroidery as the owner can afford. The sleeves fall loose from the shoulders, or are caught up at the wrist. Beneath this jacket, always open, is a double waistcoat, scarlet also, deeply edged with gold lace; baggy blue breeches, broad sash, weapon-belt of scarlet leather, and high polished boots complete the costume. But the hour was already chilly at that height, and all these giants—for giants the Montenegrins are in the upper class—wore a "struka." It was simply thrown across the shoulders, and the fringed ends swept the ground on either side. I have never seen a garment more striking. The martial stalk, proud bearing, high, bony features, clear, keen eyes, and fair moustache fiercely curling, of these dignitaries, gave them an air which I can only describe as "old-world." It became more evident to me that the man who does not own a "struka" lacks the most effective article of attire which the æsthetic soul could wish.

One of these stately fellows came, with a pleasant smile, to sit beside me. We had no common speech, however, until another warrior joined us, who spoke French; I discovered an hour after, that one was mine host of the inn, and the other the town chemist. They asked me

whether I proposed to call on his highness that night. I had actually no clothes but the suit I stood in, well-worn "dittos" of serge. But this fact, I was told, made no difference whatever, and the chemist hastened to convince me by fetching the first aide-de-camp. That official, Captain Matanovitch—afterwards Montenegrin Commissioner in the occupation of Dulcigno—repeated with hospitable warmth the assurance of his friends, and next day I had an interesting audience with his highness. More than that, in the afternoon came an invitation to dinner at the palace. Nothing could satisfy me there was not some mistake, and I wrote to the prince himself, declaring solemnly that I possessed no clothes besides the modest costume he had seen. In reply arrived an aide-de-camp at the dinner hour, to conduct me to the palace. I went—on compulsion, but with particular pleasure.

All the interest of Cettinje centres round the palace, a rather large, low building of whitewashed stone. It gives on the broad grassy street described as appropriated to waywodes and government offices. On its left front stands the famous tree where Montenegrin sovereigns dispense high justice—the supreme court of appeal. A low wall surrounds the prince's dwelling, with an archway in the middle. A stalwart sentry keeps guard in a rough and ready manner. Military education has not taught him the mystery of saluting,

and officers stroll in and out unnoticed whilst he chats with a friend, leaning on his rifle. Two strides only from the arch rise three broad steps leading to glazed doors, which a servant out of livery—in black, that is, with white tie—opens to the visitor. The hall is very low, but broad, and pretty with bright colours. Two or three servants in handsome costumes rise and bow to the visitor. At the bottom of a double flight of stairs an aide-de-camp bids him cordial welcome, and he ascends, preceded and followed from the landing by warriors in gorgeous attire, whose exact status is not easily determined. In the corridor stand others, evidently servants, whose glittering decorations tell of feats remarkable in a land where every man has brave deeds to boast. Some of them wear an odd combination of steel scales on chest and shoulders, which is admitted to be the survival of armour used not so very long ago.

The drawing-room to which one is introduced is airy, spacious, light of colouring on walls and furniture. The floor is parqueterie, handsome but not expensive; a tasteful chandelier hangs from the ceiling, and family portraits line the walls. Four or five officers or fellow guests are standing round, and from an inner cabinet advances a stalwart personage, soldier and prince every inch of him, to shake hands. Dressed like his retainers, he is distinguishable only by his royal decorations, mostly Russian. The face is not handsome in a sculptor's

sense, but is very pleasant to look upon—bluff and determined, with frank eyes and a ready smile. His highness crops his bushy whiskers close, and shaves all his chin, which is deeply dimpled; the national fashion is to wear a moustache alone, curled like a ram's horn, but his is simply pointed. The uniform is that of his subjects, already sketched, but in studying the portrait he gave me I observe that he has a second waist-scarf, of Broussa silk, twisted above the weapon-belt.

A moment after his arrival we went to dinner, which in all respects was excellent—appointments, food, service, and wine. One cannot but marvel, under the circumstances, where the money comes from. A French traveller raised a laugh, in the early years of the prince's reign, by repeating an observation of some Montenegrin waywode. Said the chronicler: "Your crown property is large?" "Oh, yes," replied the other; "it must bring in one thousand francs a year" (forty pounds)! One has not much confidence in French travellers, and things have changed in Tchernagora as elsewhere since the Emperor Napoleon defrayed from his privy purse the cost of educating this young prince. But it is quite evident that his private fortune would not support the comfortable but not undignified state I admired, whilst the finances of the country could not support six days' charges of the army assembled at that time, much more the expense of constructing roads.

There is no concealment of the fact that Russia gives an annual subsidy, but the amount must have been raised of late, or other admirers have come forward. But, when we observe the excellent use made of such money as he somehow gets, one must hope that the prince's budget will never be diminished.

Our talk, of course, began with politics and political economy. Then we spoke of the prince's meditated visit to England, the only European country with which he is unacquainted. His highness received his education in France, as I have said. From Paris he went to study German—at Frankfort, if I remember rightly. In the course of his travels he learned Italian, and, as Russian is a semi-native tongue, it results that he can speak with almost equal ease every language of Europe, saving English. As a companion he is most agreeable, gifted with the Russian shrewdness and vivacity, but controlled by an ever-ready vigilance and sense of responsibility. His temper is extremely quick, but, though unable to control its outbreak, he has learned to await a cooler moment before taking irrevocable action. At that time the Albanians were giving him much trouble abroad, and much anxiety at home. An army of them stood on Kaliman, holding the passes to Dulcigno, whilst in the towns and districts newly annexed their kindred were arming and conspiring. No one could blame them for this, but it naturally irritated the Montenegrins.

Nearly all the trading class at Cettinje is Albanian, and the prince was revolving his wrongs in mind, whilst laughing and chatting at the dinner-table. Next day more news arrived, and in a transport of anger he gave orders that every Albanian should be expelled the town. The merciless ukase raised a great outcry through Europe, but on calling upon Mr. Kirby Greene, our representative in Montenegro, I found him very tranquil. "Oh yes, I've heard the news," he said, laughing, "but there is so much firing of blank cartridge in these countries that one is not easily alarmed. We shall see!" An hour afterwards came an invitation to the palace, and Mr. Greene waited on his highness. The prince still breathed fire and flames, but when he sent for his English adviser the fit was already passed. In truth, he had never really meant to expel the Albanians, but to order their expulsion relieved his mind.

We talked of war and sport, of bear-hunting, of horses, of fishing in Lake Scutari, of damage done by wolves, of the prince's model farm, and the princess's English cows, of the capabilities of the country and the people. His highness is a true Montenegrin, a true mountaineer, in the frankness with which he claims any merit whereof he thinks himself possessed. I would not say brutally that he boasts, because the simplicity of his conviction that earth holds no men comparable with those whom he rules, is too genuine to be

described as brag. It amuses nevertheless. Amongst mountain people everywhere, ideas run mountain-big. This part of the conversation was droll, but to repeat it would convey an impression I should be sorry to disseminate. In the drawing-room, after dinner, the tone was more serious. I transcribe the notes made that same evening of one remark. "These many years," said the prince in effect, "I have had much anxiety, but I feel easy at last. The English people have recognised us poor mountaineers, whose existence has been one struggle for four centuries. It was hard to give up the territory we had won at the cost of sacrifices and most precious blood"—he referred to the territory of Dulcigno, occupied by the Montenegrins in 1877, and surrendered after the Treaty of Berlin; "but," his highness continued, "I thought that unimportant, when by so doing I could show to Europe that my people are deserving of their confidence. Every proposal made me since I have accepted without demur. Now, it seems, we must fight again; I am ready. If the powers tell me not to fight, I obey. For England has pronounced my claims just, and she does not forget or change her mind. A few years sooner or later makes no difference to us, who have waited and struggled since the first entry of the Turk into Europe. I rely upon the plighted word of England." *

* I wonder if the Prince's guileless faith has survived recent events!

But it must not be thought that his highness regards with pleasure the prospect of fighting. He said: "I may declare, for all my subjects will bear witness, that in five years' campaigning not a battery has been placed before I in person had surveyed the ground, nor has one opened fire but I was standing amongst the gunners. Many of my poor people have been killed, but their prince was beside them."

In answer to my remark, he continued: "I know it is not scientific nor prudent for the general to fight as a common soldier. But," he added, pointing to the portraits round, "there is my father, there are my uncles, descended from a line of ancestry who charged sword in hand. Times have changed. Their manner of warfare is no longer possible. But when I meet them I shall be able to declare that I, like they, put no man in front of me; that I led my people as they did, and never followed."

There was a question I should have liked to put which afterwards I asked of Bozo Petrovitch, the cousin of his highness and commander-in-chief of the Montenegrin army.

I said to that pleasant dignitary: "Europe is shocked by the stories of mutilation which circulate after each of your victories. Do your people still take heads and cut off noses?"

General Petrovitch replied frankly: "Head-taking

is a practice we have learned in years comparatively recent from the Turk"—this statement does not by any means agree with the current assertions of historians—"and mutilation is the result of our effort to introduce more humanity into the death struggle. In former times every prisoner was put to death upon the spot. When the late prince gave orders that this should cease, the people obeyed; but they would have some trophy. Besides, a Turkish prisoner released—for we have no means of keeping them—instantly rejoins the fighting force. In this last war one officer was taken five times. If a man's nose is cut off, the wound requires some months to heal, and he is recognised a second time. But the practice is nearly abolished."

As for the frightful torturings rumoured, General Petrovitch indignantly declares there was never foundation for them. But it is circumstantially told in Constantinople that a son of the living Dervisch Pasha was flayed alive less than twenty years ago. I asked the general if he would punish severely any mutilators seized in the fighting we expected daily.

"Such are the prince's orders," he replied. "But I should disobey. It is a satisfaction to our poor fellows" (*nos pauvres gens*). "I shall do my best to prevent such crimes, but I will not undertake to punish the offenders."

They manufacture strukas at Cettinge, and at Rieca.

Next day my landlord brought me a dozen, but none found favour in the eyes of Nicolo Kaloudjarovitch, who understood it his duty to see that "the effendi" was not imposed on. My landlord said at length, after all the town stock had been inspected and refused:

"The best are only made to order. You will have to pay much dearer if you disappoint a waywode who is expecting his plaid."

As the price thus enhanced came only to fifteen florins, more or less, I was not dismayed, and he went off. Presently came a young girl, sixteen years old or so, carrying two heavy strukas, whilst a young fellow strolled empty-handed beside her. In Montenegro—I am sorry to add, in Albania also—the female sex, of every age, supplies human beasts of burden. Males, young or old, regard it as degradation to carry anything unconnected with a warlike purpose. I am bound to say, however, that nature lends itself to this custom, unless it be that only strongest girls survive. The Montenegrin damsel, as a rule, is a sturdy, snub, uninteresting creature, the most buxom of scullery-maids in appearance. A pretty girl and a very ugly one are equally uncommon, and the dress, if it allows free play to every muscle, sets off every defect of figure. In the neighbourhood of Cattaro, however, and Ragusa, where the Slav has for centuries been mixed up with Venetian, and Greek, and German blood, the women are particularly pretty; it is true they

do not work so hard, nor live in such constant dangers and privations. Of Albanians I speak with hesitation as the prudent man should who has had experience of Mahomedan communities. Female children are singularly beautiful; grown girls, when visible, have nearly always a handsome type and shapely figure; but an old traveller knows very well that the pretty sisters are kept indoors or closely veiled. I have had no opportunity yet to observe the Christian Skipetars.

But this Montenegrin maiden was certainly good-looking and well-shaped, though her downcast expression would prejudice her, no doubt, amongst the youth of Cettinje, who, like all Slavs, are joyous in the piping times. I bought her two strukas for about two pounds six shillings, and the youth, who had not said one word, eagerly pocketed the money. After a few days' stay, employed in visiting the towns of that odd country, villages we should call them, I rode to Cattaro, whither the fleets had transferred their "demonstration." How we English were laughed at, what good jokes I heard, how we laughed at ourselves, during that time! For all the responsibility of that droll promenade en mer was laid upon our shoulders, and the outcome of this ridicule we have still perhaps to see. But I, at least, found it most delightful to have English ships, and pleasant English gentlemen, awaiting me at Cattaro, though it was for only two days I could enjoy their welcome.

After that time I started back to Pristan-Antivari, and ten days later I once more reached Cettinje. On the morning after my arrival, I went to call upon a friend, and in passing before a little house I saw my young weaver of "strukas" engaged at the wash-tub with a little sister. It was not a romantic occupation; cutting bread and butter for a family offers more capabilities for sentimental treatment, as we all know. But I tell truth, and the fact is that this young lady was washing dirty clothes in the doorway of her house. She recognised me and smiled timidly; I approached and asked a light, whereof, indeed, I had occasion. This address disturbed her in a manner which I thought strange, seeing that a light is asked and given in the east of Europe without more formality than in Spanish America. She coloured, and it was with trembling hands that the bit of charcoal was offered. I said, for form's sake, raising my hat:

"Je suis fâché de vous avoir derangé, mademoiselle!"

But conceive my astonishment when she replied: "Au contraire, monsieu." Our conversation did not go far beyond that. The young lady was so frightened and nervous that I quickly left her; besides, her French was not colloquial—she understood, but the words of reply did not come readily.

Hitherto, in all my Montenegrin travels, I had found only six persons to speak French, including his

highness, who talks all languages but English; two to speak German, and two to speak Italian; very many spoke more or less of Greek. It was vastly surprising to come across a young maiden who exchanged compliments in French across the wash-tub, and I set my interpreter to make inquiries. His report explained this mystery, and also the air of shyness and depression which had struck me, so different from the usual manners of a Montenegrin girl. The two sisters lived with their mother, the widow of an officer, distinguished in those hard times when fighting the Turk was a Montenegrin's life occupation, before Europe had discovered this gallant little country. He died, of course, upon some field of glory, imperishable in ballad, but never to find place in history. There is no system of pensions or rewards in the service of Tchernagora, where a man's simple duty is to fight, for which he takes no credit, nor expects advantage. But this waywode had been a favourite, and the Prince Danilo, afterwards assassinated, gave a free admission for his two daughters to the national school. Thus my heroine learned French.

But, before her education was complete, a dreadful accident befel. Mother and daughters went to Rieca on business, and the eldest, strolling along the lake side, was captured by Albanian marauders: such incidents were common before the war, upon either side the boundary, Christian or Moslem. They took her across

the lake to their own home. The girl suffered no ill treatment; woman is sacred, in a certain sense, to Montenegrin and Skipetar. She was merely held to ransom. As war had not yet been declared, the prince complained to the Pasha of Scutari, and he made strong representations to the chief whose clan was guilty. The chief inquired, and reported that the prisoner had no wish to be released, a reply which the Pasha transmitted gleefully. It was supported by a letter addressed to the schoolmistress. But the prince and the girl's mother refused to credit an explanation so improbable, and the Pasha was alarmed by a threat of appeal to Constantinople. He insisted that the captive should be brought to Scutari, and she presently arrived, after four months' stay with the kidnappers. Her mother was waiting in the prince's steam-launch, which immediately got under weigh. The girl's only explanation of her conduct was that the Albanians had been so very kind, she did not want to hurt their feelings by depriving them of her ransom. It is not surprising that an excuse so simple failed to win credence. A monstrous rumour circulated presently, to the effect that this Christian girl had fallen in love with a Moslem youth, and she was regarded with horror. Re-admittance to the school was refused her, and she became a pariah. As years passed, and nothing occurred to renew the scandal, the maiden outgrew it to some extent; but it left her timid and dull. I wa

interested by the odd story, and I made further inquiries, but nobody knew more than these naked facts. The girl has never varied in her tale, absurd though it be. I must add also, that nobody even suspects the Albanians of abusing their power whilst she was in their hands.

LEGEND FOURTEENTH.

A MANTELPIECE.

In the house of Mr. David Ross, at Lahore, I had seen bits of Mooltan pottery so exquisite of colour, so graceful in the form and grouping of their ornament, that I resolved to buy some specimens if the chance came in my way. I am quietly convinced that Providence intends me to go everywhere before I die, and in calmness I awaited the decree to visit Mooltan. It came, and it was obeyed without surprise. Those who would travel into Scinde have half a day to wait at this famous but secluded town. All my servants vanished within half an hour, on pretence of buying warm clothes. I threw myself upon the kindness of a Parsee store-keeper, who showed that extreme courtesy and intelligence in which I have never known his race to fail. And I am perfectly pleased to find an opportunity of expressing this opinion of a people whose very readiness to oblige often exposes them to annoying misconceptions.

The Parsee knew all about earthenware—my belief is that he knew all about everything, from the authorship of the Book of Job to the proper use of the Trevelyan gambit. They are awfully clever, those Parsees. The

store-keeper entrusted to me his only son, a pretty boy clad in silken raiment and a gold-embroidered cap, who spoke English like an odd volume of Macaulay's essays. This child mounted one of my horses, and conveyed me to the "pot-bank," as we say in Staffordshire. Beneath an avenue of peepuls we passed along the high city walls. Very grand they are still, these memorials of Sikh rule, great barriers which leave nought visible betwixt the earth and sky excepting domes and minarets that pierce the canopy of blue. Archways and gateways break the line here and there. Through the open portal, as in a frame, one sees the dusky, narrow street, cleft by sudden torrents of a light that glows and dazzles. In sunshine and shade the many-coloured throng streams ceaselessly. Under the trees upon our right, graceful girls, most ungracefully trowsered, weave and wind and roll their silk on sticks. I do not at all understand the operation, but it is pretty to observe. The soft and flimsy skeins, red, yellow, or purple, are stretched in foot-wide ribands, as it were, from peg to peg for a dozen yards. They glint in specks of sunshine, and the girls pass to and fro, parting them with staffs, and shyly glancing at the strangers as they move. My little Parsee could have explained it all, no doubt, but I did not ask. What on earth does it matter? Here is a pretty scene, a glow of light and colour, shapely young creatures moving under green leaves; what need to inquire more closely? Be

satisfied! Admire and thank God for a glimpse of beauty. Lowest of all instincts is the mechanical; was it in mere caprice that the Greeks drew Hephaistos as ugliest and most stupid of the gods?

We reached our destination on an edge of waste land, riven with such pits and deep sunk ways, bristling with such mounds and broken walls, as Miss Meteyard describes in her sketch of an early English pot-bank. I saw rows on rows of lovely vases, tiles, basins, objects of every shape, set out to dry. One marvelled at their delicacy of form. It is in this point that the Indian artist generally fails. His sense of colour lies beyond our rivalry, but in shape he falls below the Chinaman. Anything complicated and incorrect he loves, and he thinks himself to have attained the utmost perfection when he has violated every Grecian rule of taste. It is not so with all, however. Muhammad Hussein, to whom the Parsee recommended me, is an exception. His sense of form is as true as his feeling for colour, and that he has gathered unconsciously from the sky, the trees, the weather-stained battlements, the girls at their silk, and all the panorama of bright life about his door. If he consults a glass, as I doubt not he does, the artist may occasionally find a motif in the contemplation of his own perfect face and admirable costume.

I remember writing of the man that same night I met him. His beauty, to a painter's eye, absorbed me even

to forgetfulness of the charming things around. I do not write of an imaginary character. Muhammad Hussein is producing pots and pans at this moment, and he is perfectly well known. A Persian by birth, he has carried into exile processes not forgotten but neglected by the Indian potters, and the success of his productions is raising the whole tone of art at Mooltan. If you, reader, wish to possess a specimen of earthenware that shall light your room with a blaze of tints, rejoice the eye with a form classic but unconventional, and a decoration finished, smooth, and new, he will supply it at a price which you, in your astonishment, will call ridiculous. I am very sure that Mr. Lang, the Deputy Commissioner of Mooltan, will be pleased to be your agent. He cherishes the rising fame of his city, and I myself, who have not the pleasure of knowing him personally, am indebted to his zeal for the safe transport of my purchases.

The mantel-piece—that of which I write, for I have another more ambitious, but, perhaps, less striking—may be described in the utmost brevity. Bunches of flowers, white or sky-blue in colour, lie on an indigo field. Between the plaques are inserted writings in the Persian character. I have not yet chanced to entertain a pundit who can read these inscriptions, but I see that Muhammad Hussein has not faithfully executed my commission. I told him to introduce the grand refrain of the nine-

teenth chapter of the Koran—it is the nineteenth by-the-bye? of which the words run, after every verse: "Which of the Lord's mercies will ye ungratefully deny?" Whatever be the text he has substituted, it is certainly nothing like this, though my little guide explained with a scrupulous exactitude of grammar, and the man quite understood. For a long while it puzzled me to suggest a cause for this alteration, but in one of my moods of semi-consciousness the truth was revealed.

Muhammad was justly flattered to receive an order direct from "Belati." Many fine things had he turned out for sahibs resident in India, but I was the first who, coming from England and returning shortly, had preferred the art of Mooltan to that of our boasted manufacturers. So he talked a good deal of the commission I had given him. In the coffee-shop frequented by his countrymen, and by wandering Afghans of the Shiah sect, he exhibited his designs, and sketched examples of florid caligraphy with a stick upon the sandy floor. In a short time the jealous company of native potters heard an exaggerated story of my doings. Mahammad is no favourite, of course. In the first place, he is a stranger; in the second, he is successful; in the third, he is a heretic. Most of the potters, in this neighbourhood at least, are Moslem, for the mystery was not indigenous of growth; though lax in their religious zeal, they profess the Sunni, or orthodox, confession. Their hatred of

a Shiah is as warm as any Turk's, if he be a rival in business. Do you care to hear, in ten words, the difference between these sects? Imagine two parties in England, one of whom reckoned Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck amongst the lawful sovereigns of our country, whilst the other accepted the succession established. Certain consequences must logically follow if the former view be recognised, and those, in effect, are the same questions, disputed to this day, between Shiah and Sunni.

Time went on, and my plaques were exposed, as is the custom, on a wall. The indignation of rivals, gradually swelling, fairly boiled over, when Muhammad set up the tiles inscribed according to my order. Here was a Shiah dog quoting the most favourite of holy texts—quoting it, too, in the hateful Persian character—for the whim of an infidel who could have no other object but to mock at Islam. Such impiety was a challenge to the faithful. Every Friday the orthodox Moollah preached upon one aspect or another of this question. The lightest sin of all was adulterating the pure Arabic of Mahomet by transcription into other tongues; but this alone merited death. At the present time this very controversy agitates Madras. The Moollah did not blame me beyond other Kafirs, but he observed that in the hell to which all Moslem heretics are doomed a special place would be excavated in

the hottest corner for the man who built my mantel-piece.

One day, after such a sermon, the less quiet spirits of the audience, bachelors and ne'er-do-wells, withdrew to coeffe-shop and bhang-house for meditation on holy things. Here the minister's address was reviewed with increasing animation. A fakir, who made his protest against Kafir rule by stripping every rag from his foul person at the doorway of the bhang-shop, declared the will of Heaven: Muhammad Hussein's tiles must be destroyed, and he himself if possible. After a due consumption of hasheesh the party sallied out, with sticks and stones. Reaching the "bank," in two or three quick volleys they smashed every bit of earthenware exposed upon the Persian's wall. He was not at home, but his mother was. I had the privilege of seeing that beldame, and I can quite believe that her onslaught was more terrible than that of most heroes of epic. Knife in one hand, veil clutched in the other, she rushed forth to avenge this injury. The assailants dispersed, with laughter and cries, galloping over the waste land, jumping the ditches and the walls.

Amongst them was an Afridi camel-driver in the service of some Pathan merchants visiting the town—a tall dashing youth, smooth and sinewy as a panther. Stimulated by a quantity of bhang much greater than his head could carry, he retired at such a pace as kept him

just outside the old dame's reach, and chaffed her. She followed grimly, raising every now and then a breathless scream for help. Absorbed in the composition of humorous remarks, the Afridi did not notice how the neighbours were mustering. When he perceived his danger they had almost surrounded him. The mild Hindoo becomes ferocious in the defence of property, as many trespassing sahibs have discovered. After scurrying here and there, the Afridi escaped, but not without damage. He ran for life down a causeway which had high banks on either side, the avengers following. But a Pathan mountaineer has few to match him in a race, and they tailed behind. Suddenly the road was blocked by a stone archway, with walls on either side. Upon one hand rose a lofty bank, on the other lay a ditch. The Afridi put his shoulder to the rotten door, pressed it open easily, entered, and closed it with a stone.

He found himself in a garden, of the sort affectioned by rich natives. High walls surrounded it, with a kiosk on every face. A shallow canal, faced with marble, ran through the midst, but it was dry and weather-stained. Flowering shrubs and lofty trees grew in rectangular thickets, intersected by tiled walks. The oriental's notion of a garden is different to ours. What he seeks, first of all, is shade, then the murmuring of water; a carpet and a pipe-stand are reckoned next, I think, and for their enjoyment a kiosk is needful. Then his soul

demands flowers of strong perfume, and the sum of human happiness is gained when the Eastern sister of Amaryllis smiles at him from a neighbouring carpet. The garden thus beloved does not commonly adjoin the house, nor is it used indiscriminately. Awkward meetings might take place, and the privacy of female life could not be maintained.

The Afridi was not surprised to find his paradise deserted. He crept cautiously from thicket to thicket, and so reached the marble pleasure-house, which occupied the centre—an open building approached by steps. Machinery, simple but efficient, pours a flood of water into the fountains, cascades, and marble channels which surround the colonnade, but they all were dry. The Afridi thought he might rest himself whilst his pursuers dispersed. He stole a few oranges and sucked them. Then, deeply meditating, under the influence of heat and bhang he fell asleep beneath the marble dome. The strange events that there occurred to him he related to the magistrate next day.

For the young zealot had been recognised, and when, at night, he was re-entering the serai where lodged his master, the police caught him like a partridge in a net. With most of those implicated in the destruction of my tiles, he made his appearance at the court next day. All produced alibis, a thing of course—no man in India so poor as to be unfurnished with an alibi at need. And

the magistrate convicted them duly, one after another, till he came to our hero. That mountaineer was very much excited. With enthusiasm he confessed his guilt, adding, that when God has approved a deed it is not for man to punish it. Such words are heard with attention in a land where the Deity's name is not lightly uttered, where the fancied commands of heaven too frequently lead to murder upon earth. The magistrate asked an explanation, and proudly the prisoner replied: When lying in the summer-house he had a vision. An old man, taller than the trees, appeared before him, saying, "The infidel shall be broken like the potsherds of Muhammad Hussein. For thyself, fear not! Death is like the bursting of the bud in the pomegranate, when the sweet flower escapes. The joys of the martyr (ghazi) have no end." Thereupon two virgins stood before the sleeper. Their beauty was incomparable, and one said to the other: "Who is this, and how comes he in the garden?" And the other answered, in a voice like that of water, when it laughs beneath the roses: "He is a true believer. Fortunate will be the houris who receive him at the gate!" Then the first spoke again: "Let us give him a token, that he may remember us!"

"They passed away," cried the prisoner, "but here, here are heavenly gifts I found upon my bosom!" He drew a pair of enamelled bracelets from his waistcloth, and shook them above his head. The police closed

round him, and his fellow-prisoners drew back in alarm.

When the excitement in court had quieted, the magistrate asked various questions, which were answered not unwillingly. The prisoner declared he had not possession of the bracelets when entering the garden. No human artisan could make such lovely things. He would rather die than allow an infidel to touch them, but if a holy man were found he might show them to the court. No delay occurred in fulfilling this condition—the profession of holiness is so well-stocked in India that experienced practitioners can be obtained at a moment's notice. The bangles were received in a consecrated cloth, and shown to the magistrate, who recognised costly specimens of Delhi enamel, set with gems. That the prisoner had bought them was an absurd supposition; he had stolen or found or been presented with them. The magistrate offered no remark in handing them back; then the bar asked permission to see, and the holy man went round with his treasures. At that moment came a rich trader of Mooltan, interested in some business before the court, and sat down at the lawyer's table. He had just heard an outline of the strange story, when the bracelets were paraded before him. The old man started—snatched them from the Moollah—and examined them with wide and greedy eyes.

"You recognise those jewels, sir?" observed the magistrate.

"No," the merchant answered steadily, though his whole arm shook as he returned them. "They are handsome, but I do not know the manufacture."

It was no one's business. All knew that Selim Ibn Batula possessed a garden near the potter's field, and it was understood that he had both wives and daughters. But if he did not claim the bracelets—why every man knows his own property. The Afridi was condemned to a month's imprisonment and a fine; pending his release, the jewels lay in custody of certain holy men.

This is why Muhammad Hussein did not put the writing I had ordered into my mantel-piece. I have a great curiosity to learn what became of the Afridi, his bracelets, and his houris; that tale however has not yet been revealed to me.

DR. GATES AND THE SEÑORITAS.

In the capital of Nicaragua, ever so many years ago, I met a very handsome young scamp whom I shall call Dr. Gates. Like others of his profession whom one encounters in that part of the world, Gates had "lost" his diploma. Throughout the Spanish American republics, laws are excellent, and practical in a degree which almost shames ourselves; their weakness lies in the execution. A doctor unfurnished with credentials beyond dispute would be arrested in Granada before his first patient could bear mute testimony against him. Gates was not a man to play hide-and-seek for coppers amidst the rural population. He professed to be awaiting the attested copy of his diploma, for which he had written to the States; more probably, he was making arrangements to buy or forge one. Our belief was that the youth had been a chemist's apprentice, who left his fatherland for reasons known to an inquisitive order of mankind, poetically called Myrmidons, but recognised by the vulgar as Police. One must not be too particular, under certain circumstances, with whom one forms acquaintance. We should, perhaps, have been ashamed to make an intimate companion of an unprincipled,

scheming young fellow. But—did you ever travel in Nicaragua or such countries when you were young? If not, your high-toned opinions lack the special weight of local knowledge. I erred, at least, in good company. There is a lieutenant-colonel of Engineers whom I just missed at Simla, the other day, after losing sight of him for fifteen years. Do you recollect Gates, *mon colonel*, and the amusement he gave us at Mestayer's hotel? I know you do, for mutual friends at Simla recalled to me adventures you had told them which I had half forgotten.

The fellow was very handsome, dashing, and reckless; the sort of man whom girls in their teens and women *sur le retour* find irresistible; at an intermediate age of reason, the sex does not care for Gates and his like. He used to live, at the time we knew him, in a big old palace off the Plaza, with an ancient washerwoman, a puma-cub, and a very fine horse. I cannot honestly describe the residence; I recollect nothing particular about it, nor the contents thereof, but, to the best of my belief, it held only two hammocks, a portmanteau, saddlery, a banjo, and fire-arms. Such extreme simplicity of furniture checks a hospitable inclination, and discourages the morning caller. Another drawback to the house was that cherished puma-cub. It seized me once in its arms, giving me the greatest fright I have ever experienced; and I make no

such boast for myself as nursery biographers make for Nelson. It will be seen, therefore, that the prologue of my story is almost finished. Sometimes, returning from our ride, we saw Gates standing at the huge barred window of his mansion, strumming a sentimental air upon the banjo. We understood that his music was addressed to beauties invisible, who dwelt in the opposite palace. But he kept silence about them. We did not feel such interest as to make inquiries. Two years ago, I met in London a comrade of that joyous scamper through the Spanish Main. Amongst other stories he told me was the dramatic adventure of Gates and the Señoritas. I have been intending ever since to jot it down, but wars and distant travel have prevented me.

The opposite palace which I have briefly mentioned was the residence of Don Pascual de Andagoya. Lineally descended from the hero whose name he bore, one of the earliest *conquistadores*, afterwards Governor of New Castille, the old gentleman regarded his mongrel compatriots with contempt, disliked the Gringo—the Spanish emigrant—and bitterly hated the foreigner. These finely balanced sentiments left him very few to love, and he accepted the situation. Such trivial affection as survived a general disgust was given to his daughters. There were two, Merced and Viola. I am not told their age, but they were old enough to feel most utterly bored and miserable. If the ancient Don had allowed them to

enter society, such as it exists in Granada, perhaps they would not have been fascinated by an unknown youth who played the guitar at an opposite window. The girls must have known that he was a heretic and a pauper of doubtful repute. The form of maiden propriety ruling in Nicaragua does not include reserve towards a servant, and the exact situation of Gates's affairs was notorious. But the old Don would not allow his daughters to accept what Fortune offered for their happiness, and Fate took its revenge. In process of time Gates succeeded in gaining recognition, then he ventured a letter addressed to neither of them, asking an interview. For the credit of the girls I must add that these successive advances were not received hastily. A time elapsed almost more than decorum would require from persons who have made up their minds to yield. Before Gates obtained a reply to many letters, songs, poems, and sighs, he found his diploma, or somebody's, and invited public confidence.

It had not been necessary to indicate which particular angel ensnared his heart before an interview was accepted. Both sisters had black hair and eyes, white skins and teeth, pretty figures, and the rest of it. They belonged to the same type of beauty, though differing in character and expression. So that Gates found it easy to distribute the vague tropes and figures of his love. Each believed herself the one adored, but, like a well-

bred girl, flattered her sister. This state of things could only last until the meeting. It is not compulsory on a man to make his choice between two sisters at the first exchange of words, but the circumstances here were peculiar. For several months the doctor had been wooing a girl unnamed, and he was bound to declare his mistress at the first chance. After some thought, guided by such vague hints as reached him, he elected for the eldest, Merced. Neither beauty nor character influenced the decision, for he did not know one girl from the other. But Merced was thought to be her father's favourite.

If the doctor's heart could throb beyond its constitutional beat, it did so, I imagine, when he entered Don Pascual's garden. The key had been thrown to him. Close beside the entranee, two figures stood, scarcely to be distinguished in the darkness. "Mi corazon!" Gates whispered, plunging at once into his *rôle;* but no answer came, for reasons good. The young ladies waited to learn which was so romantically addressed. Gates would not commit himself, the prudent youth, until he knew that both were free. Merced might probably have a lover, and in that case all would be lost by precipitation. Advancing a step he murmured, "How kind of you, senorita, to accompany your sister!" No answer! It might be only a maid. In despair, Gates threw aside his caution.

"Will you not speak to me—Donna Merced?"

The word was uttered. Viola drew apart, exchanged a whisper, and retired. The rest of the conversation need not be chronicled. It was the usual thing—vows and protestations and brag, observant shyness and curiosity. After half an hour of very innocent and silly discourse, Gates withdrew, in a frame of mind remotely akin to love.

Merced was a charming girl; yet Viola, had he known her, would have been the doctor's choice. His suit would have marched much faster, with as good a chance of securing the stakes. Merced would not have resented a disappointment she would scarcely have felt. Viola had quite another disposition. As she went towards the house, after that rebuff, her throat was dry with jealous rage, and her heart full of anger. She had worked herself into love for the heretic who had trifled with her. The whole scheme was planned between those two for her humiliation. The doctor's written words, his glances, and his songs, so carefully impersonal, had been accepted as hers alone, and she never thought of reconsidering them. Jealousy pictured all sorts of things that could not be. Viola slipped out again, and overheard the parting of the lovers. If the tremulous decorum of the lady reassured her, the passion of the gentleman fired her brain. She could have killed him then and there. With a bitter complacency deferring her revenge, Viola pleasantly bade Gates good-night.

I am interpreting the story which Barbachella gave to me in the form of an enigma. Some parts, in truth, are beyond explanation, but I think that earnest reflection has discovered the main lines of the conduct of those engaged.

When, for the second time, Gates entered the premises of Don Pascual, he found Viola awaiting him alone. She said that her sister had been seized with illness, and begged him to attend, not as a lover, but as a medical man. Almost as much pleased to have found a patient as a bride, Gates followed the lady. She took him through a side-door into the house, and guided him with whispered words through the darkness. They traversed a long corridor, descended a flight of steps, and entered a passage where the atmosphere was dark and cold, the floor uneven. Gates thought that his mistress had a strange taste to live in a vault, but he felt no suspicion. Presently the girl let go his hand, murmuring, "Now I dare to strike a light!" He heard the rustle of a dress moving away, the soft closing of a door, and the creak of a bolt slipping in its socket. Then a match was struck, and light streamed in through a grated aperture. "What is this, señorita?" Gates cried in vast astonishment.

Viola showed her face at the opening, a beautiful face, but distorted with jealousy and triumph: "You are my prisoner, macho!" she laughed. "If you wish

to die at once, only cry out. The peons know how to treat young men found in Don Pascual's house at night. They cut lovers into bits and burn them. But shout! It will sooner be finished!"

Gates was utterly amazed at this treachery. "What have I done to you?" he asked.

"You have trifled with me, a Castilian of blue blood! After pretending love, you have jilted me! No more words! Look round! You are not to starve. There is a bed in the corner and food. You have found them? Now, pleasant dreams, macho!" She went off, laughing fiercely at the doctor's entreaties. The light faded and went out suddenly, as another door closed. Then Gates stood in darkness. The moment's glance had shown him a large and lofty chamber, solid stone all round, as are the vaults of these ancient palaces. High up there were small windows, and a door at either end. A rough bedstead of hide stretched on posts stood in a corner, with food and water on the floor beside it. Gates threw himself upon the bed to think, but I need not trouble the reader with his soliloquy. I have no information on the subject, and, if it comes to imagining, any one can do that. The doctor was armed, of course, and he knew that his prison could scarcely be called subterranean. When that building was raised, men did not take trouble to hide their wickedness. The windows must look upon the garden, and a resolute outcry could not

be disregarded. That those who came to him would be hostile he did not doubt, but the Don's Indian servants could be neither numerous nor formidable to a well-armed man. Thus to force his way would be a desperate risk, nevertheless. If any persons were killed, he would certainly be charged with murder, and, in all probability, be executed.

The long hours of darkness wore through, signalled by the clang of hoarse church bells, which told him how close he was to freedom and humanity. It came to Gates, I doubt not, as it has come to others in deadly peril, to wonder how his days had passed hitherto in weary indifference—to feel astonished that the mere sense of freedom and safety had not seemed an abiding boon, since the forfeiture thereof may come so suddenly, and is so terrible. He could not sleep. Each few moments he started from a doze, revolver in hand, to peer into the blackness and listen. Gates had been in Nicaragua long enough to know that, if this was no trick of a silly girl, Viola would not want instruments to carry out her plan, be it what it might. The first glimmer of dawn in the high, narrow windows brought him to his feet. As it grew and broadened, he went round the chamber, examining each stone. But the blocks, cemented as it were with Indian blood, stood smooth and strong as on the day when a ruthless conqueror saw them disposed. So Gates reached the further door, and

instantly took comfort. It was bolted and barred, and the bordering planks, of mahogany, would have defied his knife for hours. But the middle part was only a shell, scooped by white ants. I should fancy that Gates sat on his bed and laughed. The carelessness was so very feminine. The ants, of course, had worked from the darker side, where their galleries, across the mahogany, could not have escaped observation had Viola looked. Gates now waited events with tranquillity, unwilling to make a disturbance when his escape was assured, but eager to learn what the next move would be. Hungry though he was, fear of poison deterred him from touching food.

As the clock struck seven, Viola came with two stalwart peons, who carried their machetes unsheathed. The door was opened boldly, Gates standing on the defensive with his revolver. Viola's disappointed glance at the provisions told him that his caution had been wise. "Give up your arms!" the girl exclaimed from the threshold, "or these men will kill you."

The doctor laughed, but as the Indians drew near, he cried, "Stand back!" and they halted, silently waiting for commands. Viola was unprepared for this resistance, expecting probably that the prisoner would be asleep. "Do you not see," she said, "that we can starve you to death here, unless you submit?"

"If it be God's will and yours, señorita, I must endure it."

"How silly! You would rather die by inches, then? —So be it."

They went out, one of the peons remaining in the corridor, squatted upon the flags. Quite satisfied, Gates delayed no longer. He unfixed a leg of the bedstead, and in a moment had broken away the middle of the door, leaving the edge and the ironwork intact. The Indian glanced through the grating, and ran to seek his mistress, whilst Gates hurried along a passage, climbed a staircase, and found himself in the *patio*, as he expected. All these palaces are built on the same model. Two or three female servants, barefoot and half-clothed, were carrying plates from the cook-house to the living-rooms. They stood and stared as the doctor crossed the courtyard, passed through the empty drawing-room—a vast bare chamber open to the roof—through the big gates which give on it, and so, in a dozen steps, to his own door.

That was the end of the adventure, so far. Turning it in all ways, Gates did not see a chance of making money by it. Exposure must do harm to his professional repute, and, whilst the advantage was uncertain, the risk was so well assured, that he abandoned the idea. For some weeks he even thought of giving up an ill-omened suit, but patients did not flock to him, and the

future was blank. I am willing, indeed, to believe that the short interview with pretty Merced dwelt in his heart. Before renewing the broken courtship, it was obviously desirable to let the girl know what perils he had run for her sake, otherwise she would naturally take counsel with her sister.

The doctor's love-letters had been translated into grammar by an ancient scribe who sold articles of stationery on the plaza. The good man was as secret, as uninterested in the billets-doux he wrote as a confessor should be, but seldom is, in that land. To him, after much deliberation, Gates entrusted, not the grammar of his epistle only, but its delivery. The charge was accepted without fuss, but, on learning the señorita's name, the old man asked a dollar "strong" for his extra risk. Within a day or two he announced that the letter had been duly received, and so in truth it was—by Donna Viola. Unsuspicious of the mistake, Gates renewed his broken correspondence, and despatched it by the same purblind messenger. But things did not advance.

Don Pascual had a coffee plantation near Masaya, where he was used to pass certain months of the year. Gates became aware of the migration impending by the sight of two bullock-carts before his door. All day the servants were packing and unpacking these vehicles, under fussy direction of the Don, whilst the señoritas gave an intermittent supervision from the window, and occa-

sionally raised a sweet voice in energetic remonstrance. Towards evening the oxen started; a lighter cart drew up, and the ladies climbed into it, with their maids; the Don mounted a peaceful steed, and then the cavalcade set forth, escorted by two armed peons. The doctor made a sudden resolve. There was nothing to detain him at the capital; chance might befriend his suit upon the road. He ordered his horse, and started two hours after the waggons. The moon was well up when he overtook them, halted by a cottage. It was a pretty scene, I doubt not; many such dwell in my recollection. I can see the narrow, deep-worn road, overhung by trees black against the pale blue sky. They form, as it were, a setting to that small open space before the hut where moonbeams are sleeping. One side of it is bounded by a hedge of organo cactus, upon whose clumsy arms, upraised perpendicularly, the sulphur-coloured blossoms gleam like stars. Feathered heads of the coyol sparkle icily above the fence; beyond them is the grey-thatched roof, weighted with flowering creepers; and silken banana leaves behind. Upon the other side of the road a dewy waste of shrubs, smothered under billows of convolvulus; shadowy, misty trees bounding it in. Velvet moths jaunt sleepily from flower to flower. The air is full of scents, glittering with moonlight, spangled with fireflies, which start, and flash, and disappear. The flitting night-jars twitter, a deer bells suddenly, and

the coyotes answer with a distant howl. Some such scene it was, no doubt; the waggons stood before the hut, which showed a red gleam of fire through its bamboo sides.

Gates approached the opening of the fence, and looked in without dismounting. The girls stood by the door muffled in their scarfs, whilst Don Pascual held eager converse with a peon on whose naked body blood was trickling. Gates called to ask the matter, and the old gentleman came up thankfully:

"Our blessed Lady sends you, Sir," he said. "This poor man has been attacked some half-mile beyond, and robbed. If I were alone I should have no fear, but my daughters are with me."

A trembling gesture towards them might be considered in some sort an introduction, and Gates flourished his sombrero.

"I am well armed, señor," answered he. "If you can trust my escort, I vow that I would die ten million deaths for the privilege of defending these young ladies."

After much debate this offer was accepted, and Gates very earnestly hoped that the ladrones would show. He had not such luck, but his protection was gratefully accepted to the very gate of Don Pascual's hacienda. After such a service an hidalgo could not do less than ask the stranger in, and offer him a glass of green aguardiente—precious liquor! The building was a poor,

half-wooden structure, raised upon piles of ruin; comfortable enough for eyes unused to such modest ornament and convenience as a third-class villa will show in England. There were even signs of wealth about, in the silver plate, just unburied, the horses in the corral, and the herds of oxen half wild. But the untidiness and dilapidation of the house, amidst remains of past magnificence, struck even Gates, as he surveyed it in the grey light of dawn. A château had stood here, surrounded doubtless by its pleasaunces and pastures. Huge reservoirs and stone-faced canals for indigo still contained a green and slimy puddle from the late rains; not all the dye manufactured at Masaya now would fill those tanks. The great entrance arch still stood erect, showing the way to miserable huts and broken walls. Don Pascual felt a wretched satisfaction in displaying what his forefathers had been, and to what the ladrones of the republic had reduced their grandeur. I fancy Gates was calculating how much in dollars the half of this ruined property would fetch. Before leaving, he asked permission to kiss the young ladies' hands upon a future occasion, and his request was granted courteously. In twenty minutes he reached Masaya.

The introduction so gained was not neglected; but, whilst the father thawed, Merced grew icy. Etiquette was strictly observed at Don Pascual's house, and, in the rare visits he dared to make, Gates never saw one of the

girls alone. Viola's manner was charming, light, merry, and simple. The doctor almost asked himself if his tragic adventure had been a dream, and if Merced, so cold and uninterested, had ever given him encouragement. Under such circumstances, when a heedless young fellow thinks himself wronged, his love either "flows like the Solway or ebbs like its tide," as was the case with Lochinvar. Gates seems to have taken the more amiable course. I am not prepared to name the exact quantity or quality of love which his temperament would feel; whatever it was, Merced had it. He longed for the opportunity to ask an explanation by letter, since speech was denied him, and in process of time it arrived.

A neighbouring haciendero issued invitations at short date for a *baile*, the most important of those three forms of entertainment which Nicaraguan ladies know. The doctor's experience told him that in such a case girls are likely to need a swift and tasteful messenger, and he casually observed, at a morning visit, that he proposed riding into the capital next day. It happened as he expected. Viola begged him to execute a commission, and Merced, with some reluctance, made a like request. Gates consented joyfully, and in the parcel of his mistress he slipped a letter of plaintive reproaches, such as may be imagined. No more than a look was needed, in handing it, to let the Nicaraguan beauty know that something she had not ordered would be found within. She frowned

prettily, blushed, took it with thanks, and made as though she would open it upon the spot—but didn't.

Recognition by Don Pascual had obtained for Gates the *entrée* to all that is best of Nicaraguan society. It even procured him one or two patients, and Barbachella has not heard that he killed them. Accordingly he had an invitation for the *baile*, and rode thither beside the hidalgo's cart. Both girls looked wonderfully pretty, in cheap and simple dresses of white muslin, carefully guarded during the journey by shawls and rugs. In the great bands of hair plaited to a coronet on their small heads they wore a wreath of yellow dendrobia. It had been gathered on a tree outside and cost nothing. So the dresses were looped with bouquets of those flowers and ferns we painfully raise under glass, which every Indian girl considers a mere detail of her toilette. But civilisation has its revenge. The broken floor had been cheaply mended by a naked carpenter, the wooden walls were eaten and scaled, the furniture frowsy. But Gates was not less indifferent to this than were those to the manner born. He thought it fairyland when Merced's soft eyes and velvety white cheek, her low voice and slender figure, became his property for a moment, whilst the wail of Indian music made his blood spin. "You had my letter?" he whispered.

"Do not write me any more, or I shall give them to my father ——"

"Why do you treat me so? Have you forgotten? etc. etc. etc."

"A girl is happy to forget when a man does not remember. Your letter is burnt."

"Señorita, have pity! If you will stay one moment, we may understand. Have you had no letters from me since that night we met in the garden?"

"None."

After this, I suppose that an explanation took place. Gates did not think it desirable or prudent to tell Viola's behaviour towards him just then. The consequences might have been a scandal. He took it for granted, also, that the scribe had simply cheated him, destroying the letters and keeping the money.

His dance with Merced finished, Gates had Viola for his partner. He sought her not without alarm, for it was impossible to say what such a girl would do next. She was mild, however, "as a white dove hatched in a church." The embarrassment was all his. Gates wished to let her know his deep regret at their former misunderstanding, and to explain that he thought her eagerness for revenge quite justifiable under the view she took. But at the first word Viola blushed and trembled, begging him to forget what she could never forgive herself. A man in love is deprived of half his wits, and the doctor felt real pity for the humiliation of this charming girl. She changed the subject delicately by expressing

the tenderest interest in her sister's love, and Gates found himself gossiping of his future plans before he had half finished talking of the past. After that night, he recovered his former footing with Merced, and they constantly met. Sometimes Viola came to the trysting place, and, if she spoilt their cooing, she made them laugh. Gates supposed her to have quite recovered, but Merced told him one day that the girl prayed and cried for a change—any change; declaring often that, unless some new and exciting interest arose in her life, she would run away and see the world. Merced was rather frightened, knowing her sister's wilfulness. Gates learned with secret rapture that those young ladies had each a small fortune in antique but valuable jewels.

Things reached that crisis in his suit when the lady blushes and refers to papa. With much misgiving, Gates sought the Don, and was very coldly refused. He carefully impressed on that stern parent that Merced knew nothing of his demand, and thus left her free and unsuspected. Henceforth the family was not at home; but, as this probable result had been expected, it did not prevent meetings and correspondence. Gates proposed an elopement, and he found no insuperable aversion. Such an ending to courtship is not unusual, nor much [illegible]roved, in Nicaragua. Girls cherish the thought that [illegible]d passion and disregard of consequences are native [illegible] "Castilian blood," which all ingenuously claim,

though their hair be woolly as a negro's or stark as an Indian's. So, when Gates reached this point, Merced was far advanced on the way. He collected his mysterious resources, and resolved to make for Leon with all speed. His mistress was an Amazon, and horses are easily found; but a side-saddle could not be discovered in twenty leagues about. Merced laughed and blushed on hearing of this difficulty. "Don't be shocked," she whispered. "I never saw a side-saddle in my life, and I certainly could not ride in one." So Gates had a masculine saddle slightly altered according to her directions. They chose Leon for refuge, because in that democratic town everybody would rejoice to spite Don Pascual de Andagoya, most aristocratic of all aristocrats.

Even if Merced had known there was cause for mistrust, her secret could not have been kept from Viola, who urged them to flight with feverish impatience, and herself arranged details with Gates. It is dangerous to approach a hacienda by night, when the dogs range the neighbourhood, hunting coyotes and wolves and prowling pigs. Though a stranger protected himself, the peon on guard would certainly approach, hearing the dogs at bay. It is equally dangerous, of course, to leave the *enceinte*, but Merced knew that the impassive Indian would escort her without question, surprised though he might be. So they resolved that Gates should fire a little beacon on high bare ground at some distance, where the girl should

join him. The light would not be thought suspicious, for poor travellers camp in the bush. The risk was that the watchman might stroll thither for company and gossip before Merced could find him.

Their preparations complete, the girls sat waiting, Viola the more nervous of the two. As the hour approached, she could scarcely speak for emotion, pacing to and fro, trembling as with cold. "How good you are!" whispered gentle Merced. "You will comfort our father and make him forgive me?"

"Hush, child! Don't tease!" Viola answered hoarsely. "How slow time is in this hateful place!" She leaned against the window, muttering to herself.

A boding of evil crept into Merced's heart. In the dim twilight she could see how hot and fierce were her sister's eyes, eager and intent as those of a savage animal watching. Suddenly a musket-shot rang out——a second, and a third. Viola started as if hit, then, in eagerness to see, threw back the jalousies with a clang, and leaned out upon the sill.

"What is it?" cried Merced, taking her by the shoulder in fear; but a rude push was the reply. Merced was too much alarmed to be repulsed. Seizing her sister round the waist with hysterical strength, she drew her from the window, and compelled her to listen and to speak. Viola moistened her dry lips and laughed: "How should I know, foolish girl? You are nervous

because your lover is two minutes late. It's nothing. Girls must learn to submit to men's caprices. I think he will not come to-night."

"Viola! What is it I see in your face? Have you—murdered him? No—no! I see the light! Forgive me, darling! I was mad with fear!"

Viola stood motionless, gazing with dilated eyes at the signal. When Merced fell upon her knees in penitence, and took her round the waist, she turned, looked slowly down, and drew a long dagger from her skirt. Merced could but watch, her eyes wide and mouth frozen with terror. "Mercy!" she gasped, in a voice scarcely audible. "Sister!—Viola!—for God's love spare me!" The arm was raised to strike, and the victim did not move. Perhaps this helplessness touched the girl's better nature. She tore herself from that feeble clasp, and Merced, unharmed, fell like one dead upon the floor.

Gates meanwhile had started, with a boy who had been in his service some weeks. He who travels in Nicaragua after sundown will not go far unless he keep his eyes about him, but on these lonely shadowed paths a resolute foe can always lay an ambuscade. Fortunately for Gates, the peons whom Viola bribed to do her vengeance were those who had followed her to the vault. Knowing that the destined victim carried a pistol, they declined the *arme blanche* of close quarters,

providing themselves with an ancient gun apiece. One failed to go off, and the other threw a hurricane of slugs at a harmless elevation above Gates's head. Letting go his frightened horse, he sprang at the Indians, who fled; but both dropped to his revolver—one dead, the other wounded in the thigh. He lay on his back, silent and staring, as Gates approached.

"Who are you?" he asked. "Are you a thief?" No answer.

"If I leave you here, you will die without a priest, the guilt of murder on your soul, and you will go to hell where your comrade is now."

"Fetch me a priest, for the love of God! Let me confess and save my soul."

"You would die before he came. But I am a doctor; I can dress your wound, and keep you alive for a while—only, you must tell me all."

"Yes, yes! I am Manuel Davila, a servant of Don Pascual's—Donna Viola ordered us to kill you for insulting her."

Gates made a rough tourniquet, and stopped the bleeding. His plucky boy had caught the horses, and was standing beside him. He tied them in the wood a few yards farther off, and sent the child back for a priest. Then he fired the beacon and waited—waited half an hour, growing more and more anxious. What might this mad girl be doing in her jealousy? With

him she had twice failed, but Merced was defenceless. Why had he kept her secret, and left his love without even a warning? The people summoned must soon arrive, and then he would have to go, uncertain what fate had ruined his schemes—perhaps for ever. Thus distracted with alarm, peering over the misty and broken ground which Merced would traverse, he did not hear a lad who crept stealthily behind, until the crackling of a stick made him turn suddenly. "Has the priest come?" he asked with impatience. "Then we must go back!"

"Macho maldito!" cried Viola, springing at him. Gates leapt actively aside, closed, and threw the girl, but her knife scored him from shoulder to waist. He seized it, and hurried off, without wasting words, for he knew his hurt was bad. His frightened horse carried him at a gallop to Massaya. He paused not even to honour "Dios" as he passed the tinkling bell, the dim old lantern, and the fat priest shambling beneath a canopy. "I am wounded to death, and I seek help!" was scarce accepted as excuse for such profanity. It was set afloat by the ribald, but anxiously contradicted by the devout, that "Dios" himself had been spattered with mud by this heretic.

But Gates's wound was not dangerous for a healthy man, though very painful. After several weeks of fever and agony, he rose from his bed, a thinner and a steadier

man—I trust, a better. Manuel Davila had been executed, upon the evidence of the Indian boy and his own confession. In some countries, his grievous wound would have procured him a respite from trial, but not so in Nicaragua. Search had been made for Viola, without result. It was proved that the horse Gates left behind was sold in Leon by a handsome boy, who went on to the port of Realejo, where his track was lost. Viola had not gone empty-handed; her madness did not run that way.

Don Pascual was still at the hacienda, brooding over this scandal, and breaking his heart in solitude. Gates begged an interview in terms that could not be rejected under the circumstances. I do not know, and it is needless to invent, the arguments and persuasions which decided him to accept the doctor's suit. One stipulation he made—that they should all leave Nicaragua at once, before the marriage, and go to Europe. I conceive that Gates presented no vigorous opposition to this plan.

Some three months afterwards, the wedding took place in the cathedral at Panama, and thence all three sailed for climes where their tragic story was unknown, until Barbachella told it to a gossiping *littérateur*. I have altered the names of course. Barbachella fancies that Gates entered at some German university, and, years before this, he has, I hope, secured a genuine diploma of his very own.

THE CONVERSION OF BRUNI.

This is the legend of Bruni, which tells how that empire was converted from Paganism to Islam. It is accepted by Malay scholars as founded in truth, and I have only re-clothed the ancient bones with flesh.

The story thus begins: Amongst the twelve monarchies of the Orang Laüt, called by strangers Malay, Johore was first in dignity and achievements. Her pirate ships swept every sea; her armies marched in Siam on one side, Java on the other. The fishermen had slaves to drag their nets. In the sultan's palace of ivory, before its golden gates, a thousand nobles kept watch, a thousand holy fakirs prayed, a thousand princesses attended on their lord wearing necklaces of diamonds and bracelets of pearl. Beautiful they were as the brides of Sawira Gading, the heaven-born hero, but most beautiful was the Dayang Aysha, the sultan's favourite child. Her face was round as the moon, her nose like a parrot's beak, her hands like leaves, and her eyes burnished gold, &c. I think that specimen of the local phraseology is enough. All Oriental beauties are round as the moon, whiter than pearl; all have parrots' beaks for noses, and eyes of burnished gold. The description means that

Lady Aysha was lovely. Guided by what small knowledge I have of Malay noblewomen in these days, I imagine her to have been small, well shaped, of a golden bronze complexion, with large dark eyes, a little purple mouth, hands and feet of the daintiest symmetry. Courage she had, that is apparent from the story, and an irresistible determination to get her own way.

Suitors came in plenty, from India, from Siam, from the Chinese kingdom in Borneo called Batangan, from all the Malay sovereignties. Outlandish gifts and extravagant epistles were laid at the sultan's feet. But Aysha would not decide for any of the royal lovers, and their embassies departed, one after another. At length, when the princess began to reach her prime—say, sixteen years old, the Pangerans of Johore waited on their monarch. They pointed out that the diplomatic relations of the kingdom were growing more and more disturbed, as neighbouring sovereigns successively took umbrage. Unless the Dayang Aysha made up her mind, and speedily, an attempt to seize her by force was probable, and dire misfortune would follow. The sultan, much alarmed by this plain speaking, invited his nobles to consult and choose a son-in-law, since Aysha would not. They instantly named the Sultan of Sulu, a famous warrior, and a staunch ally. His embassy had returned, unsuccessful like the rest, a month before; but the Datu Tommangong undertook to renew the negotiations.

No Malays were settled in the north of Borneo at that time, and the terrible Kayans had not yet begun to move from the interior. All the coast line of Bruni was held by Muruts, from the Sea Dyak country to the borders of the Chinese kingdom of Batangan, already mentioned. The Muruts, an enterprising and martial race, dwelt in rude comfort under the sway of one supreme king. For several generations they had been waging a desultory struggle with the "Kina Batangan," a strife which came to a final end only in the middle of the last century, with the disappearance of the latter. But peace reigned at the moment of our story. The young chief of the Muruts had lately visited the Chinese Rajah, and married his sister. The pagan name of this young monarch has not survived. He is called Sultan Mohammad before as after his conversion.

Returning from a foray, two years after his marriage, the prince left his comrades off the mouth of the Batangan river, and sailed to feast with his brother-in-law. The luxury of the Batangan court, the ceremonial observances, the order and prosperity of the kingdom, much better suited his disposition than did the rough ways of his own realm.

The Chinese Rajah had been one of those who vainly asked Aysha's hand, and the ambassadors returned whilst Mohammad still lingered at Batangan. They brought an enthusiastic description of the girl. A

thousand instances assure us that Malay women were not secluded in those early times, whatever their rank, if unmarried. The delegates had seen Aysha, and they drew such a portrait as warmed even the phlegmatic Chinaman. But he could not share Mohammad's indignation at the affront of refusal by the spoilt beauty. That fiery youth proposed nothing less than to storm Johore, and carry the princess away. He offered ten thousand Murut warriors, the bravest of the tribe, to avenge his kinsman's wrong, asking no more than the expenses of the expedition, and a half of the plunder. But the Chinaman has a thrifty soul, and very practical ideas about women. The generous suggestion was declined, and Mohammad—so to call him prematurely, retired in a huff, taking with him one Pangeran Ahtah, who put more poetry even than the rest into his report of Aysha's loveliness. A few days' conversation with Ahtah reduced the Murut prince to that delirium of passion which Orientals sometimes reach. It was very wrong of him, a married man, and probably a father. Perhaps his alliance with the Chinese lady was a political affair; but it is scarcely worth while to speculate about motives, where all the Eastern world sees but the simplest working of human nature, and nobody protests—not even the wife.

Mohammad ordered that all vessels taken by his rovers should be asked for news from Johore, and that

any man who uttered the Dayang Aysha's name should be spared and sent to court. Thus he learned presently that negotiations were about to recommence with the Sultan of Sulu, his personal foe, as it appears. A fleet of praus was posted to intercept the embassy, and Mohammad vowed by his ancestral gods, whatever they were, that Johore and Sugh should burn ere Aysha should be lost to him. Then he chose twenty warriors of renown, swore them to die in his cause, loaded a swift prau with treasure, and embarked. Of course the historian takes this opportunity to catalogue the gorgeous robes, the gems, and beautiful objects which the Bruni prince carried with him. We may believe what we like, and still pity the reigning sultan, who sits in a faded bajo, and a petticoat of his wives' spinning, to hear with what magnificence his ancestor could travel four hundred years ago.

Ahtah is the comic personage of the legend. Whilst firing the chief's imagination with tales of Aysha's loveliness, he had not foreseen the alarming consequences which would befall himself. Mohammad could not live without his stimulant, and Ahtah's choice lay betwixt prompt execution and complicity in a mad freak. Preferring dangers still unseen, he embarked with the company of well-born desperadoes, who made him their butt. Ahtah's name has a suspicious sound. He comes from the court of the Chinese Rajah, and the way he

was treated by the Muruts suggests that he was himself a Chinaman.

After some weeks' journeying, Mohammad reached an island, probably Singapore. Leaving his vessel hidden in the mangroves, he took four trusty vassals and paddled to Johore with Ahtah in a fisherman's canoe. As fishermen they disguised themselves, darkening their aristocratic complexions with burnt cocoanut and turmeric. I think I know what sort of place Johore was in its glory. A guileless hint referred to beyond informs us that even the ivory palace "had a seamy side." That the show buildings were incomparably more handsome, the city richer and more populous than now, is not to be disputed. But there is no reason to think that it bore comparison with the towns of India or Java, or even Celebes.

The mosques doubtless were built of stone, and there may have been stone houses in the bazaar, the remains of a higher civilisation. But it may be reasonably suspected that the conquerors lived in dwellings of their national architecture, as did the Goths, and Franks, and English, when all the fine buildings of Roman luxury lay at their choice. Very large, I daresay, were these wooden palaces, elaborately carved, filled with the plunder of old and wealthy cities destroyed by the savage rovers. Countries now overgrown with forest, or just cleared anew for a barbarous agriculture, were thickly

peopled when the Malays came down. I imagine, however, that if some dozens of handsome buildings be subtracted, and a rich bazaar or two, the aspect of Johore was much what it now is—squalid, thriftless, ill-odorous, gay of colour, bustling with the cavalcades of an arrogant nobility, well used to the clash of arms and the unheeded wail for justice.

Such as it was, however, we can believe that a Murut prince was awed. There is not a hint surviving to inform us what like was the capital of Batangan, beyond the suggestive fact that it was orderly and industrious. A Chinese population would not be likely to expend its substance in pomp and show, fine arms and embroidered dresses. It would look to the roads, the convenience of trade, the stability of things in general, of houses as of government; not, certainly, as Europeans look to matters of that sort, but with attention much more close than Malays would give. However that be, it is recorded that Mohammad and his reckless comrades were daunted by the glories of Johore. They did not venture to carry out their design of asking the Dayang Aysha's hand in open durbar. No human means, they thought, would lead such a princess to look at a Murut Rajah, and Mohammad desperately resolved to invoke the supernatural powers.

Here we enter on a course of witchcraft. An old magician is introduced, several demons, a philtre, and a

waxen image. The reader will exclaim, of course, that the latter was borrowed from Western necromancy. I can assure him that the fact is just otherwise. The portrait of wax which melts before a fire, causing a reluctant heart to burn as it consumes; even the pins which give agony, disease, and death in successive stabs; are the immemorial stock-in-trade of an Eastern wizard. Our forefathers borrowed their ideas five hundred years ago.

But what I think to see amongst the incoherent fancies of the ballad-monger is something more prosaic than necromancy. Mohammad, I fancy, gained the acquaintance of an influential courtier, connected perhaps with his own people through the sacred ties of piracy, or it may be through marriage. By the use of that treasure so prudently shipped, "a penniless dame of long pedigree" was brought over to his cause, and she gradually roused the princess's imagination. It may be supposed that Aysha was not in love with the war-worn Sultan of Sulu, imposed on her after formal rejection. A girl fuming under this annoyance hears that a gallant youth has traversed a thousand dangers on the mere report of her beauty; probably the dame forgot to mention that he was married. There is no need of supernatural machinery to explain subsequent events under these conditions. Letters passed, which warmed the lady's gentle curiosity to interest. A meeting was

implored and granted at length. Be it noted that this concession has not even now the importance in Malay countries which it would have elsewhere in the East; and manners were still more free, no doubt, so soon after the conversion of the Orang Laüt.

The description of the interview exhausts our ballad-maker's store of epithets and florid fancies. He flings gold around like whitewash, treats precious stones as dirt, gives a sonnet to the Dayang Aysha's toes, which, it would seem, were polished as diamonds, pink (with henna) as the sky at dawn. I have already admitted a belief that she was beautiful, and that the sultan really had treasures. But one is rather shocked to learn that Mohammad entered her chamber by cutting through the kajangs, palm-leaf mats, which made its floor. Thus a lover often gains admittance amongst the poorer class at the present day; and those who like may believe that the poet thoughtlessly attributed to his princely hero a trick familiar to his own experience. But I incline to think that he unconsciously reveals a secret. The sultan's palace stood upon piles, and if so, however large and sumptuous, it can scarcely have been built of stone or brick.

The romantic pair fainted at sight of one another—of course; Oriental lovers always do. Recovering after a time, the gentleman delivered himself of poetry, transcending all that the author of Bab Ballads might com-

pose in dreams. The lady was not less happily inspired. I give, as examples, one couplet of each:

> HE: * * The strength of man is not like that of a drunken sailor! He who fixes his gaze upon a star, will he see it blush, and tumble into the mud?
>
> SHE: * * The rose has many leaves, and each contains a heart! But in the midst of all her petals hangs the refreshing dew-drop!

Pages of this sort of thing. The bard will not concede them a word of prose. But I am very sure that a dashing young pirate and a self-willed princess would not talk such foolishness. Ahtah, trembling with fright, and the intriguing maid of honour, were present, and it is unlikely that Aysha took off her veil. She saw through it, however, clearly enough to lose her heart irretrievably, and Mohammad seems to have kept on fainting at intervals from that time forward.

Whatever the young folks said to each other, it was enough to establish a thorough understanding. They do not seem to have met again; probably the danger was too great for the lady accomplice to risk a second time. Mohammad waited at Johore until the Datu Tommangong returned from Sugh, with the sultan's joyful acquiescence, and a train of Sulu nobles. He had cut his way through the Murut squadron with loss. The prince lingered only to hear by which course the returning fleet would travel, whether "on the wind," through the Straits of Makassar, or up the Bay of Siam, and thence

across. The former best suited his purposes, since he could scarcely miss so large a convoy in the narrow seas. Aysha urged it on the sultan, who assented.

Thereupon Mohammad hurried back to prepare for his audacious exploit, whilst the sultan leisurely equipped his fleet, and made ready a trousseau worthy a daughter of Johore.

Mohammad had enough to do. His Muruts were able seamen, used to dangerous excursions, and heedless whom they met in their own waters. But the praus they handled with such boldness were scarcely more than fishing-craft beside the war-ships of Sulu and Johore. Mohammad took what measures were possible. He forbade the use of slaves to paddle, insisting that every man on board should be a warrior, ready to fight when the moment came. This unpopular change cost a heavy sum, for the Muruts would accept it only at a price. Mohammad sent to his brother-in-law, begging, insisting, threatening, until the Chinese rajah made him a loan of cash and vessels. Everything completed, the Muruts put to sea, toiling painfully against the wind towards Balambangan. The bard would have us credit that they were twenty thousand strong, all fighting men. It is safe to say that this figure is multiplied several times, but we have no means of guessing the accurate number.

In the night Mohammad had a dream. He beheld

captured told for certain that the Dayang Aysha had sailed three weeks ago by the other course. Mohammad just had time to spit him like a fowl, and tumbled senseless.

The report was too true. So soon as the Datu Tommangong heard the route proposed, he vehemently objected. To his cost he knew that the Muruts were cruising in those waters, and Aysha's safety was too precious to risk. The sultan yielded at once to an obvious argument, which his daughter could not find pleas to resist. She wept in secret, but the case was hopeless. No means of warning her lover. Those who trust the bard will credit that Aysha mourned her fate in poetry, and damaged her constitution to that point that she would certainly have died in her detested husband's arms. The tale is prettier so, but experience does not second my wish to believe it. In the East, at all events, girls do not really put such a high value on themselves as men put on them.

So, when the storms had ceased and the monsoon blew smoothly, the Armada set sail. Of twenty Johore vessels and ten Sulu it consisted. A prouder fleet had never shown on Oriental waters since Kublai Khan swept round Borneo a century before. For reasons already stated, one may believe that the legend does not exaggerate overmuch here. It is possible that every fighting man was clad in silk, every noble in cloth of

gold; that each domestic slave had a golden bracelet. The richest Pangerans of the two richest Malay empires flaunted the spoils of Java, Siam, Cambodia, and every land from China to Ceylon. I do not see reason to dispute that their shields were silver, their chain-mail inlaid with gold, their krises studded with emeralds and diamonds, their other articles of furniture to correspond. The Lady Aysha's own vessel may well have been superb. Built of some dark timber, it was overlaid from bows to stern with carvings à jour in light-coloured wood; texts from the Koran above, from the Arabic poets below. Tripods, alternate with flag-staffs, smouldered day and night, burning sinka and essences. The deck-house used by Aysha and her ladies was plated with silver and hung with satin. The slaves themselves were so exquisitely lovely, that those who had not beheld the mistress thought each of them a queen. No fighting men sailed in this vessel, which was manned by experienced and trusty captains. The picked slaves who paddled, each of them a giant, were guaranteed their liberty on reaching Sugh. To protect this gorgeous craft and its inestimable cargo, the Tommangongs of Johore and Sulu sailed on either hand.

So, in splendour, the fleet advanced. At dawn and evening Aysha looked for the war-boats of the prince, but saw them not. The less responsible nobles plundered as they went, and many a fight the princess saw from a

distance, many a scene of heartless bloodshed which probably moved her not at all. For human beings are what education makes them, and to this girl it seemed the natural order of things that ships should be looted and their crews destroyed in mere gaiety of heart. Those who did these horrors in her sight were the most honoured of the nation, heroes whose names and exploits have survived to our distant day. Women grow used to the sight of blood of human creatures, as of animals. We are not greatly shocked when a butcher's wife goes unmoved through the shambles. She may have all the virtues recorded on a tombstone, nevertheless; and so it was, I doubt not, with the Dayang Aysha.

Conscious of their strength, the Pangerans travelled slowly, anchoring to seize provisions and fruit, to harry a village, to hunt, or stretch their legs ashore. The news of this leisurely approach spread before them, and loot became very scarce. So they reached Cape Cambodja, and gathered for the voyage across an open sea. The Tommangongs summoned their respective suites and made a discourse. It was laid down that independent cruising must now cease, and the ships sail in a body. The injunction was received with good grace, for there was small chance of booty and great risk from pirates if the fleet dispersed. Then the Tommangongs gave a feast and went to sleep. The moon rose at midnight, whilst some of the Pangerans were still on deck telling

stories and drinking; for the commands of Mahomet sat lightly on these new believers. Whilst gossiping thus, far on the horizon they beheld a flotilla of small craft hurrying by, black specks on the moonlit sea. One after another the captains yielded to temptation, silently shook out their sails, awoke the paddlers, and drifted out. This sent to warn a friend, that was summoned by a trusty slave. In an hour's time three ships rode alone at anchor, guardians and charge sleeping peacefully. The watch saw their fellows glide away with Oriental indifference, and sat chewing betel, whilst they observed them go further and further southward. Suddenly the Tommangongs were roused by eager talking and hurried footsteps on the fighting deck. The yell of the Murut onslaught, the thud of spears, the grating of canoes against the vessel's side, brought them out half-dressed. Bewildered, scarce awake, outnumbered though they were, such warriors made a gallant struggle. But it was useless. Many a hero famous in legend died in the fight, and none survived.

They battled bravely until the Tommangong of Johore, glancing aside, saw the precious craft hastily set sail and sheer away. Then he knew that Aysha was captured, and, withdrawing to the middle of the deck, began his song. It was prepared long since for such a moment. The grey old pirate chanted his feats of arms, his fights and victories, amidst the clash of swords and cries of

triumph and despair. Step by step, slipping in blood, the Muruts fought their way. Then the song stopped suddenly, and all was over.

With true dramatic instinct the legend-maker has brought his story to a close at this point. He does not even add that Aysha and her husband lived happily ever after. With the utmost brevity it is told that the Datu Paham was first to board the prau, swinging himself from the yard-arm by a rope; it is likely enough that this gymnastic feat, or his ruse to draw off the war-ships, procured him his name in Johore, Paham—clever, cunning, quick, and ready-witted. He conducted the Lady Aysha and her attendants to Bruni with chivalrous respect, deferring his choice of a prize until the ladies had recovered their fright. What became of the Murut fleet or its pursuers is not stated. The former probably escaped, and one feels uncomfortable in thinking what fate befell the Malay Pangerans if they were so mad as to return after this disaster. More likely it is that they established a pirate settlement somewhere on the islands; or they may have attached themselves to the Murut Rajah, who welcomed all adventurers and desperate men, after throwing in his lot with the Malays. One would like to know how the sultan's daughter found herself in her husband's rude capital; what the Chinese lady thought about it, and what she said of her rival's appearance. These details will never be given. Aysha dis-

appears in the harem, whence the elder wife never emerged. There is some reason to think that she died childless. No Bruni prince traces his descent from her, and the succession passed to a daughter of the Chinese wife, who married an Arab; vide infra.

What we know is that the Johore Sultan was terribly shocked on hearing that his child had fallen amongst Kaffirs. He did not try to recover her, or to avenge the insult, for reasons that would seem good, no doubt, if we only knew them. What he did was to send a gorgeous embassy at next monsoon, begging Mohammad to accept Islam. The Murut prince had no objection. His young wife joined her influence, no doubt—all royal conversions, saving that à l'envers of Julian, have been effected by love. Upon the same day, he, and all who had married the Johore girls, became Mahomedan, and, if his subjects did not all follow, they did not protest. From Johore came a crowd of priests and broken nobles, who speedily transformed the simple capital of the Muruts. Malay became the language of the court, the higher arts and civilisation of the Malays superseded the ancient ways of life. Mohammad embarked in that career of conquest which gave the empire of Bruni a very high rank amongst the Malay monarchies, thirteen in number by this addition. Rajah Brooke quotes from Dalrymple the statement that "in ancient times the Bornean empire extended not only over the whole of that great island,

but also over the Philippines. * * * In 1775 the trade was considerable between Bruni and China, particularly the port of Amoy," &c. What the country is now can be ascertained in a hundred books, which all give the same account of utter rottenness and decay. It is most interesting as the last that survives, as it was the last to rise, of the thirteen Malay sovereignties, which covered all the far-eastern world.

As for the Sultan of Sulu, it is not recorded that he did anything at all to avenge the dire offences committed against him.

We have said that Mohammad was probably a father when he went courting Aysha. The question is unimportant for an Oriental, but a reader may be amused to know the evidence on which we ground this conjecture. The Genealogy of the House of Bruni shows that Mohammad's line was continued through a daughter. Vide the document, "Forests of the Far East," vol. ii. p. 332: "He who * * * introduced the religion of Islam was H.H. the Sultan Mohammad. * * * One female child by his wife, the sister of the Chinese Rajah, whom he brought from Kina Batangan, was married to Sherif Ali, who came from the country of Taib, and who afterwards governed under the name of H.H. Sultan

Barkat (The Blessed), and it was he who erected the mosque, and whose Chinese subjects built the Kota Batu," &c. We may reasonably conclude, therefore, that this princess was older than the children of Aysha, the favourite wife, if indeed she had children.

SADOK KHAN, GHILZAI.

I.

I have already hinted that for mere brutality and roughness the people of Afghanistan have no rivals in the world of my experience. Other objectionable habits are theirs. Though the most pious of Moslem, they discriminate amongst the injunctions of the Prophet. To exterminate the infidel is a duty welcomed with enthusiasm, but the command to bathe is quietly ignored. It may be regarded as an invasion of private life, to be tolerated by no independent Pathan. Accordingly, he does not wash his face in a month, his body never. His great head has never felt the comb. His clothing of felt or sheepskin is generations old. No savage, half-human, is so dirty, none so shameless in vice. Looking on these ferocious giants, one must shudder to think of their forefathers' part in history. Imagine their foul rush upon the delicate peoples of India, like a swooping of fetid vultures on a sick lamb! Imagine the sack of Delhi by these brutes! I have seen the worst savages of every continent, and I aver that there are none so hideous as the Pathan. In his eye, large but furtive, his marked features and set mouth, the gentle feelings of humanity

have no trace of expression. The child scowls and strikes; the man has no thought but of plunder and blood. His laugh is ready enough, a hoarse, rude guffaw, which shows the black fangs through his unkempt beard; but no one ever saw the Afghan peasant smile.

Do not think, nevertheless, that I hold him a monster irreclaimable; that would show a very imperfect knowledge. On the contrary, I am one of those who believe that the Pathan will have particular influence of a beneficial sort upon the Indian system. He is now what circumstances have made him. Struggle of tribe against the central authority, feud of clan with clan, village with village, family with family, brother with brother, fill the peasant's life—no long one generally. So soon as he can point a gun, he is dangerous to others, and himself in danger. With half the hamlets round, there is a public blood-score always open, and amongst his own neighbours a private reckoning. Nay, if there be several brothers in a family, the chances are that they will make a feud among themselves; and, in default of brothers, there may be an uncle or cousins, or perhaps the father himself, to quarrel with; and quarrel means bloodshed. I do not suppose that in the world's history there is record of a state of things like that prevailing in Afghanistan. Other races are bloodthirsty and treacherous, but brothers do not kill one another as a common thing. The village news of Afghanistan is murder. As soon as a man-child

can comprehend, his mother teaches him what families to hate; as soon as he reaches puberty, his father tells him how to kill. What wonder that generations of such existence have brutalised the people? The Afghans have apologists—I am one myself—but nobody qualified to speak has yet claimed for the best of them a single virtue, save a limited regard for hospitality.

And yet I expect to see them active and useful subjects. The hideous life described exacts courage, self-reliance, independence—these qualities which we miss so sorely amongst "our Aryan brothers." No one disputes Pathan intelligence or industry. This people indeed are remarkably clever, in a European sense, which is not the Asiatic. They have no inkling of caste, that evil excrescence of paganism which Indian Moslem have grafted upon the doctrine of human equality taught by their creed. It is strange to hear a Mussulman refer to his caste, like a Hindoo, but one has to reckon with the feeling.

Many hundred thousand Pathans dwell in our territory proper, descendants of conquerors, refugees, and emigrants. They keep their language, and very much of their national character. Fickle they are, untrustworthy, prone to shed blood for small injuries, constitutionally blind to the rights of property. The martial spirit of their race has noway deteriorated in the plains, and every Punjab regiment has two crack

companies of Pathans, British subjects born for the most part. To see these fine soldiers interpreting or gossiping with a crowd of their hill relatives, is to see a curious contrast. A great deal of faith and a very close scrutiny are needed to credit that all are kin, nay, identical of race. No man is smarter or more soldierly than the Pathan sepoy. He averages near six feet in height, his shoulders and his limbs are as brawny as an English navvy's. In these respects the wild Afghan yields him not a jot; the difference appears in look, bearing, and expression. The soldier is upright, clean as a Hindoo, shaven, courteous; the hill-man, caked with dirt, slouches under his ragged mantle. The eyes of one are bold, but pleasing of expression; he shows beautiful teeth in his ready smile; the other, though he be the younger man, has brows set in an ugly frown, eyes puckered with distrust and ceaseless vigilance. Certain it is that the sepoy is not altogether such a frank and amiable creature as he looks; therefore, I would rather think that the hill-man is not such a hopeless ruffian as he seems. Few as are these civilised Pathans, by comparison with other races of India, and lately as they have come under our influence, already they have made themselves felt in the civil service as in the army. They understand us as no other native can, or ever will, apparently. Without abating a tittle of their religious dogma, they accept our learning, and use

it. Much is contained in the fact that the one native Deputy Commissioner in our service is a Pathan.*

I have been thus particular in describing the Afghan, because the Ghilzai tribesman is regarded by his fellows as the quintessence of brutality. He is, if possible, bigger of frame, uglier of expression, and dirtier, than all his neighbours. The face of the Ghilzai makes one shudder, so relentless is its cruelty. He claims to be not Pathan but Koord, the descendant of old conquerors, and his significant name means "son of the thief." It is to be understood that no hill-man heeds an order unenforced by arms, unless it agree with his own wishes; but the insubordination of the Ghilzais passes every thing known elsewhere. Though each of the three princes who nominally rule the tribe is more powerful, and richer, than any outside noble, a command of theirs is weighed, and if disapproved is treated with contempt. In his immediate district, the chief can secure obedience by force, but beyond a day's march from his castle any clansman will resist by arms if he think fit. The strongest and richest of the three princes is Badshaw Khan, who dwells at Kushi, beneath the Shutargarten. The next in power lives by Ghuzni; I forget his name. The third, Sadok Khan, has his residence near Khelat-i-Ghilzai, and in this unpromising locality I saw him.

* Alas, since writing those lines the high official alluded to has come under suspicion of shameful ill-conduct.

We were mightily hard pressed for forage all through that long march from the Indus to Candahar and onward, but our troubles reached a crisis at Khelat-i-Ghilzai. The day after arrival our horses had positively nothing to eat. In other respects we were badly off. What fuel could be obtained in that treeless waste was reserved for the fighting men, and the camp followers shifted as best they could without fires, when the thermometer sank below zero. Our personal privations were comparatively trifling. Bread had been exhausted throughout the force for several days, the boots of the sepoys and artillery were a form without soul or substance. More serious by far was the deficiency of atta and dhal, which had run so low that the native soldier's rations were supplemented with mutton for all who would accept it. Tea and sugar and rum had not yet given out, but we in the head-quarter mess set a premature example of stoicism. When the commissariat officials whispered a hint that shortness of anything might possibly befall if no convoy arrived within a certain date, General Stewart docked our rations promptly. Other commanders in the British service have been charged with weakening the transport for the conveyance of their own luxuries—most unjustly charged as I happen to know. But our general would not give ground even for suspicion.

Something had to be done. Boots and flour, rum

and tea, would not be found betwixt Khelat-i-Ghilzai and the Indus, but forage and wheat lay stored in all the villages around. With much reluctance, the order was issued to "requisition." Every morning a squadron of cavalry paraded; a company of foot turned out, if opposition was thought possible. Then Captain Hobday girded on his fat bag of rupees, and mounted. So the little column filed away, regulating its pace by the slow walk of the camels, detached to carry home our plunder.

After two or three days of this sort of thing, we became aware that beings comparatively clean and civilised were to be met around our camp. The "political's" tent began to offer what one might call local interest. Since we had left Major St. John in Candahar, the delicate duties of "political officer" to the force were performed by Colonel Brown, R.E., of Quetta fame. I should have liked, had space been granted me, to tell but a few of those stories which Colonel Brown daily gathered, and nightly repeated at mess, with a humour which needs no description for those who have heard him talk, even at second hand. The political's tent was always open, and he himself "disclosed writing," as they say in stage directions. Around the entrance, rank beyond rank, a crowd of noisome giants squatted in the mud. An indefinite quantity of knives and pistols they wore, but the long jezails had been left with the horses and dogs, outside

the line of sentries. We idlers assembled to see the show sometimes, but in capacity for silent staring the Ghilzais vanquished us. They did not say much amongst themselves, and, though the elders "thought a deal," they exchanged very few remarks, now in Pushtoo, now in Persian, with their host.

One day appeared a little group of cavaliers better mounted and armed than the common. At the head of them rode a slim ill-shapen youth, with features like an Aztec, and lustreless eyes aslant. He wore a long Persian coat braided with gold, a Persian cap of astrachan, knickerbockers—so to call them—and knee-boots of untanned leather. No object like this had we yet beheld in Afghanistan. Creatures bestially beautiful, of the feline type, we had admired in a sense, but this being was distinctly a "swell." Colonel Brown recognised him. He borrowed chairs, and the youth sat down, nursing his long sabre.

A smaller edition of the same type, evidently a brother, took a seat behind, and the retainers squatted. Presently some one informed us that this Persian Aztec was the heir of Sadok Khan, supreme chief of the Ghilzais between this and Ghuzni; and that his business was to announce the arrival of that potentate.

Moments of excitement were very rare in that camp. Since leaving Candahar, only one man had been murdered, and one hostile expedition sent out. The days were

awfully dull and hot; the nights arctic. We hoped that the visit of this noble would cause a certain break in the monotony of life, but General Stewart had doubtless good reason for treating him without fuss. Very few officers chanced to be present when Sadok Khan arrived. He rode a vicious-looking piebald. One of his sons attended on either hand, and a score of retainers, handsomely armed and mounted, trooped behind. They looked mighty fine at a distance, but a closer view was not so favourable. Their sheepskin coats had once been embroidered in the gayest colours, but grease and weather had changed the tone to that of an ancient fresco. Their long locks and tangled beards hung over their shoulders. Each carried a jezail, more or less ornamented, across his saddle-bow; each wore a sabre on his hip, and a pistol or two, with knives of various size and shape, at his girdle. Half-a-dozen beautiful dogs circled round the cavalcade, barking and playing. They were Persian grey-hounds, thorough-bred, and greatly prized. Somewhat larger than our English strain, they did not otherwise differ from it, saving the long ears, fringed as it were with floss silk, which hung half-way to the chest. Specimens have often been exhibited, but all that I myself have seen had the tail and the back of the legs similarly "feathered." I am authoritatively informed that this feature, though it adds to the beauty of the dog, is a mark of inferior breed. All

chieftains, Pathan, Brahui, or Belooch, pride themselves upon their pack of greyhounds.

Sadok Khan is a little, slender, ugly old fellow. Nothing about him recalls the Ghilzai. He wears Persian dress and arms, he rides a Persian horse, sitting in a Persian saddle, and he talks Persian for choice. Fifty yards from the camp, when our numberless dogs began to recognise intruders, the party halted. After an eager dispute, the Khan chose that favoured servant who should help him to dismount, and came waddling towards us gingerly, like a man in tight boots. This, I am told, is a fashionable gait in Persia, where every gentleman is supposed to pass his life on horseback. At the entrance of the camp, Colonel Brown and Captain Molloy welcomed our guest, and led him to the general's tent. He looked briskly about, laughing and talking, returned the salute of the tall Sikhs on guard, with the air of a man used to that sort of thing, and vanished. But at the very door he motioned impatiently to his son, who took from an attendant a handkerchief of Manchester print. Slowly and methodically, the Aztec youth untied a knot, and offered his parent the snuff gathered in a corner of the print. Not condescending to look, the Khan thrust his fingers into the bag, and transferred a mouthful to the jaws gaping in readiness.

A supremely ugly old man! His beard had once been ruddy, a colour almost as frequent in Afghan-

istan as at home; it was now dashed with white, and grimy with snuff. He had a foxy face, and small, restless eyes. For all the taste and sober richness of his dress, the Cashmere cloth, soft as silk and smooth as velvet, the exquisite embroidery, and solid gold lace, Sadok Khan was as little like a gentleman as are his subjects. We were much astonished, therefore, when General Stewart declared at mess that the Persian apparatus, as somebody called him, proved to be one of the most polished and agreeable men he had ever met in India.

I chanced to sit beside "the chief" that night, and he told as much of the conversation as might prudently be repeated. Upon entering the tent Sadok Khan bowed, shook hands with excellent grace, and offered a double handful of gold coins, as the manner is. The general laid his hand upon them, and smilingly refused. This is etiquette, but the chief told us that for the first time he had that day regretted the ancient system when a sahib took anything offered, and stood astonished at his own moderation. For the glance he had of these gold coins told him that they were mostly ancient, worn Darics and old Tomans, and heaven knows what. There might have been pieces there of value incalculable for the numismatist. But a mere request to look at them would have been misunderstood. The coins were handed to the Aztec.

Then, after personal compliments, General Stewart

asked how the Ghilzais felt towards the Cabulis? Sadok visibly composed himself for a speech, glancing proudly at his attentive followers. He began: "I am not illiterate. I have travelled very much. When Runjeet Singh reigned in Lahore, I visited India, with my father's consent. I stayed three years, and I saw the Punjab conquered by the English. I was at Chilianwallah—it was a fight of nations"—and so on for a quarter of an hour. The old gentleman's observations were shrewd, but they did not bear on the feelings of Ghilzai towards Cabuli. "With my father's consent" is a remark worthy of notice. It was intended doubtless as a vindication of his own character, and a hint to the Aztec.

General Stewart took occasion to interrupt this harangue, which had evidently been prepared. He delicately suggested that the Khan was digressing. "I am old, you see," was the laughing answer. "We Ghilzais hate the Barukzie first, then the Durani, and then the Cabuli—we hate them all. Three thousand families of my people were determined to emigrate when this war began. The Ghilzais are tired of furnishing soldiers for Cabul. We put out our children's right eye, and cut off their thumbs to escape service. Not many of us can be forced to pay taxes, and the Ameer makes up the difference by taking recruits."

"Then you will help us with supplies and transport?" said the general.

"Are you going to stay?" replied Sadok. "If you tell me 'Yes,' you shall see what the Ghilzais will do—but if you retire, how shall we defend ourselves against the Ameer?" But the General could give no answer to this question.

He asked what Sadok thought of the chance a new dynasty would have, if Yacoob followed his father into exile. This broke into the oration once more. "Before the time of Nadir Shah," began the chief, and ran through another fragment of his set discourse. The general again interrupted, inquiring what the Ghilzais would do if the Russians came down. "We would fight to the last," was the eager reply. "I am not illiterate. I know that the Russians have conquered the Padishah, and Bokhara, and Khiva. Wherever they go, they exterminate the Moslem; and I know the Sircar—the English rule. You have no religion at all. If you try to make people Christians, it is only that they may live quietly, give you no trouble, and pay taxes. You don't say prayers like the Moslem, who always keep Allah and his prophet before their eyes, so that they may go to heaven when they die. The English is a good government, which no honest man fears. You will not be offended with me," he added, smiling, "if I say you will all go to hell. That is your business. But the Russian raj is different. The traders from Bokhara and Taschkend tell us what it is for the Moslem. We will

all die before the Muscovite has our country. But we don't want the English either, if they will only relieve us from Cabul."

After this general discussion, Sadok was asked specifically what he would do to feed the troops, and to supply them with carriage. His proposals were quite unexpected. He would do all kinds of things if the commissariat would reduce the market rates. He said that our lavish prices were ruining the nobility, who could not obtain produce for three times the sum asked a month before. And the possession of money is bad for poor people, who become audacious and dissolute, casting off the fear of Allah and the Khan. The economy proposed was a welcome idea, for we were spending an enormous lot of money. But on reflection the general "did not see it." If our prices were high, they were not high enough to tempt the people. With arms in one hand and cash in the other, we were obliged to take anything wanted. One cannot but suspect that the venerable Ghilzai had other motives besides that announced in giving us this counsel. He paid another visit to camp, quite charming everybody by his manner; but I do not know that we derived much assistance from him.

Nevertheless, Sadok Khan had a bitter purification for that visit to the camp. Yacoob Khan "ate him up" after the peace of Gundamuck, and Mohammad Jan

devoured the fragments after. Thanks to a Gladstone policy, our deadliest enemies in Afghanistan are those who were most anxious to be friends with England.—But I cannot write patiently upon this subject.

THE SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT'S CHRISTMAS.

When, at the outset of life, a man finds something he can do better than his neighbours, he makes a very pleasant and useful discovery. Most people cannot even persuade themselves that they have a peculiar genius, unless for the compounding of punch or salad, or for some graceful but unremunerative employment of that class. Others mistake their bent, and thus start in a wrong direction; others follow the right track unwillingly, believing that their real strength lies elsewhere. It is a great blessing for himself, sometimes for humanity, when a Samson feels his thews and puts them to their best use, but I imagine that it is scarcely less important for him to know where his strength will not avail. And this latter study becomes more difficult as he grows emboldened by success. If a late Prime Minister had been less clever and versatile, to accuse him of aspiring to command the Channel fleet and to perform a surgical operation would have raised nobody's laughter. Lord Verulam knew very well what he could do, but he evidently did *not* know, what everyone else perceives,

that he could not write a philosophical romance. History is full of great men who did not measure their tether.

This introduction is in the grand manner of our ancestors, who would preface a recipe for marmalade with an essay on the Hesperides, and would bring the laws of Solon to bear upon a parish pump. The point of my allusion to Lord Verulam lies in this, that neither he nor I could write an interesting fiction:—he, however, did not know his impotency whilst I recognise mine. Construction and imagination are not granted to all who write glibly enough:—pray understand that the parallel with Lord Bacon is dropped. When the editor of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* asked me for a Christmas tale, he showed a flattering ignorance of my *moyens*. Fortunately, if I cannot invent stories, I can tell what my own eyes have seen, and some Christmas days I have passed in strange company. It must be my fault if the reader does not find some interest in the plain truth of these descriptions.

I have no story to tell of English Yules. I don't think I was ever present at a dance upon that festival; I am sure the house never was burnt down; and I will make affidavit that I never proposed to any damsel in a dark conservatory. These events befall everybody else, but they never happened to me.

One single incident only I remember at home. In the hard winter of '54—or was it '55?—we picked up a

postman, asleep in the snow and almost dead, as we drove from the family gathering. Perhaps his story had thrilling fascination, but I never heard it; let us pass on to Egypt, where I spent my first Yule, after embarking on those travels which seem destined to outdo the legendary wanderings of Ulysses, or of the gentleman who wore that irrepressible cork leg.

My Nile trip, thank Heaven! preceded the era of steamers and Cook's tourists. Not many consolations do I perceive for advancing age, having distrusted Cicero when young, and now forgotten the very language of his wisdom. But one I find, neglected of that philosopher for reasons good, which somewhat comforts me. Who now could hope to land at Thebes, and find the place his own—no touts to rush at him, no photograph-sellers, no guides, nor "box wallahs," no nothing but the stupendous ruin and its blear, sad, denizens? Two donkey-boys only met us at the shore; two dancing-girls, venturing down from Esné, squatted and watched on a sand-drift. In the vast colonnade looming over us, a few sordid, blue-robed women flitted by, a few naked brats stood staring. Presently, with whoop and halloo, these descended to beg, but their fictitious spirits soon died away, and they dropped off silently.

And we, on that Christmas morning, we rode through stately gates and avenues of broken statues, through colonnades and courts, beneath cyclopean walls, towards

Karnak. Do not tremble prematurely, thinking I mean to describe those wonders. I remember too vaguely, and is it not all chronicled in guide-books? What dwells in my mind is a vision of buildings loftier than Western raving has imagined, erect, symmetrical, abodes of giants divine of soul. Miles of temple, acres of palace, incised with stories of triumph and devotion, all carved, wrought, gilded, painted! What I recollect distinctly, though nearly twenty years have gone, is that world's marvel Karnak, and the tingling of my blood as I rode into its silent hall.

How many are the trunks in that stone forest? You can look it up in the books, but I think they are fourteen in the central avenue, and a hundred and forty-four in the aisles. Such pillars! my neck ached with sketching their capitals, ten men with hands joined cannot encircle them. Those in the aisles are smaller, but huge single shafts of granite. And not one has fallen in 3,000 years; one only leans against its neighbour. The paint is there upon them, bands and stripes of colour. Before that time or since, I have beheld all the monuments of human grandeur. I have trod that hall which records its boast in gold and marble: "If Paradise be on earth, it is here—here—here!" And the vaunt is justified. The Delhi palace stands beyond all that mortal senses could desire; but Karnak was built for the gods.

And here—ignorant youths!—we had proposed to eat

our Christmas feast; hither had we despatched a lordly hamper. Hushed and full of shame we ordered it away, and found refuge in Joseph's Sanctuary, where the learned trace that patriarch's name as that of a benefactor; he presented the temple with a canoe of purest gold and much besides. There, beneath the azure roof adorned with stars—not sky, but enamelled granite—we ate a meal not unworthy of the spot whence "luxury" has passed into every civilized tongue. What a good cook was our dragoman, who is still alive and working, as I rejoiced to hear when I passed through Egypt the other day. He had the secret of some dishes unequalled in merit for campaigning. Does any one know, besides he, how to spatchcock pigeons in claret? I have travelled over the world, asking vainly.

My next Christmas worth recording was spent aboard of the Messageries steamer Cambodge, in the Indian ocean. Well do I remember amongst my fellow-passengers the Anglo-Indian widow of a Consul-General in China, returning with two fair daughters. The patronymic escapes me, but not the *petits noms*. Bless us! Lili, that slender, black-eyed girl, is a middle-aged matron by this time, and Daisy, the bright little *cadette* in socks, may very well be nursing her sixth. Do you remember Mademoiselle, or I should say Madame, Lili, the concoction of that plum-pudding which you pretended to supervise in right of sex, and a quarteroon of

English blood? Do you remember how hard you were upon my errors in the sacred phraseology of the French *cuisine*, and how chivalrously I abstained from recrimination? What a mess we made of that pudding with Mlle. Daisy's uninvited assistance! The cook brutally sent it up in a tureen and the stewards served it with a ladle.

If this harmless allusion should bring a gentle note of reproof from the ladies whom I quitted at Alexandria sixteen years ago, I shall be greatly pleased but not at all surprised. Strange cases of this sort have occurred in my own experience. The incidental mention of a name in some record of my wanderings has twice led to the discovery of persons long lost to sight.

Christmas of 1864 I shall never forget, though its story may be dismissed in few words. I had embarked at Marseilles in a steamer bound for Cagliari, the filthiest, most abominable craft I have ever tried in Europe. Very rough weather we made, even for that bad time of year, and on Christmas Eve the captain laid out anchors bow and stern, whilst the gale blew over. So, instead of dining at Ajaccio, we lay pitching off the coast, nearly every one seasick and resigned for the worst. To me, as I paced the heaving deck, the captain came secretly—a shaggy ruffian, of the class described by Smollett.

"The lady below is very ill," he said, in a frightened

voice. "There's neither stewardess nor doctor on board. All the other passengers are seasick. I rely on you to help me if it gets serious!"

Never in all my life was I more frightened. "What —why—how?" I exclaimed, but the fellow's arguments were unanswerable. I went desperately into the ladies' cabins fore and aft, with all my worldly fortune in my hand, so to speak; but one glance showed that none there could help herself, much more another. Then the captain insisted that I should behold the woman whose cries rang through the ship—one of those silly fancies which the vagaries of pre-revolutionary law have planted deep in the Gallic breast. She lay in a state-room apart, and I looked from the threshold. That moment's glance showed me one of the three loveliest women whom fate has presented to my eyes.

A most miserable Christmas Day I passed, expecting each moment to be summoned for I knew not what, nor the captain either. But a kinder fate prevailed. Next day, with considerable risk, we made Ajaccio, and the first boat which reached us contained the lady's mother and half a dozen relatives. An hour afterwards she was carried down the gangway, whilst the captain and I, mightily relieved, drank a glass of wine together.

The next strange Christmas recalled to my mind was spent in the mining village of Libertad, on the gold mountains of Nicaragua. Does the quaint little hamlet

still exist? has it grown to the dimensions of a "rush," or have the Woolwa Indians burnt it, as they threatened? Heaven knows, but few mortals. No voice can reach the world of civilised men through those close woods of Mosquito, across the bare, sad uplands of Chontales.

I had wandered thither—I don't quite know how or why—in company with John Gladwyn Jebb, Esq., if it be disrespectful towards the public to write down my old friend as "Jack." J. G. J. and I had been at school together; then, whilst I went to Brasenose, he joined the Connaught Rangers in India; tired of the service and sold out; entered at Skimmery* as a fellow commoner; tired of that, and agreed to accompany me in seeking the Itzimaya. You do not know what the Itzimaya is? Well, we did not find it, and what the legends say would be too long to tell. Ah, if I had to describe a Christmas Day in the Itzimaya! then would I have a tale that would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue in every reader's mouth to cry derisive epithets at me! But that penalty would be cheap for one glance at the Maya city.

I should like to have heard the worthy Ellis recount those travels. Ellis was our joint groom. I imagine that he would have summed them up as a "daft spree,"

* Disrespect again towards the public, and flippancy towards that venerable institution, St. Mary's Hall, Oxford.

a view we should have bitterly resented at the time, but perhaps not now. Why we went where we did, and went not where we intended, I can't explain to my own satisfaction, and J. G. J. is equally at a loss. Much effort of memory induces the suspicion that Captain Bedford Pim deranged our lucid plans. He persuaded us to take Nicaragua on our way, and thus unwittingly diverted the only expedition which has yet been made to seek the Itzimaya.

For in Nicaragua we heard of tombs mighty curious, and then again enthusiasts talked of white Indians dwelling in mysterious seclusion on the San Carlos river. Fired by the inspiriting tale, we tried to raise an expedition of discovery, and this effort, I know not how, led us to San José de Costa Rica. The vague impression dwelling in my mind is that the reputed prowess of a certain Colonel Cauty drew us to San José; but that gallant soldier of fortune was just returning to England. So, having ridden across America from sea to sea, we rode back again.

Then J. G. J. went to the Brazils, and I know not where. He is now settled in Colorado, whither I shall send this brief explanation of our joint proceedings in Central America. How relieved will he be, bless him! I can picture my dear old friend in his log hut at night, with head bent upon his hand, reflecting year after year, wondering till the brain reels, how and why

and wherefore we did what we did, and left undone those things which were expected of us.—But what larks!

That is how it was, as nearly as can be made out at present, that I spent a Christmas on the borders of Mosquito. Report had not lied about big cairns and ruins there. We explored them diligently, employing all the *ladrones* of the country side. If such eager researches brought little result, the reason is that there was little to bring. You may see our trophies duly ticketed in the British Museum, and I keep somewhere the assurance of the trustees' gratitude for our valuable and important gift. The acknowledgment would have seemed more warm, had it not been printed and misdirected. But these digressions must cease. I can generally guide my pen straight enough to facts; but the memory of our devious, heedless, joyous scurry from ocean to ocean and back, would justify, if aught can, a wandering style.

So to Libertad, for the third time. Imagine a little settlement of frame houses and reed huts, where the rain it raineth every day at Christmas time. To gain it, one has ridden several hundred miles over bare, burnt highlands, where small hillocks rise, one over another, round and smooth as bubbles. Such they are, in truth —bubbles of earth and stone, floating above a molten sea. They rise or flatten, people tell you, when, with

sick, noiseless shivering, the fire rolls in sudden flood beneath to burst through the open shafts of Cosequina and the Merivalles. Few dwell in that perilous waste, and these seek the valleys and winding ravines, where trees, hung from crown to root with Spanish moss, stand like cloaked mourners in procession.

At the edge of this scene, where the deep woods of Mosquito block it like a wall, is Libertad, or was, among glens and torrents, groves of banana, fields of maize, and cactus hedges. It had, perhaps, 500 inhabitants, a tenth part foreigners. Droll fellows these were, French most of them, always at issue with the native population, and at war with the authorities. At this time they had assembled from lonely mines and diggings in the wood to see a Christian face, eat Christian meats, and, above all, drink of Christian liquor.

If I might digress, dear me! what reams of copy I could fill with the record of a week's absurdities. Incidents of love and war, with sports and songs between, employed our time as in the days of chivalry. No one went to bed much that week, amongst the foreigners at least. Some dozen of us slept, off and on, in the back premises of "the store," on casks and bales. Each hour, day and night, a jovial crew from the other house of entertainment came to congratulate their friends with us, or these, suddenly fired by Christmas sentiment, leapt clattering from their perches to seek companionship

below. The fiddling and the dancing ceased not from early afternoon till midnight, but the conversation of the ladies had always one shrill refrain, half angry, half admiring: "*Hombre sin verguenza, da!*" Mark that these girls were all respectable, as respectability goes in that country; also, that I saw no French diggers intoxicated, though they drank enormous quantities of claret.

So Christmas Day arrived to cap the foolery. All the Indians of the neighbourhood assembled, with instruments of music, bringing their sisters, daughters, and cousins—their wives, too, probably, and grandmothers, but these I do not distinctly recollect. By Indians, of course, I mean *peons*—Christians—not the wild savages of Mosquito, whose drums could be heard sometimes in the mysterious forest. After watching the crowd awhile J. G. J. and I rode out into the hills. A certain Mrs. Bulay, widow of a prosperous man, but too old for the dangerous journey back, had asked us to dine, with all the respectable diggers of the place;—poor thing! she was shot the same night, or the next, by a savage half-breed. A strange and amusing company sat down. Since that date I have eaten with criminals and refugees, Jews, Turks, and heretics of every degree—not to mention princes, viceroys, and ambassadors, whose entertainments don't bear any comparison. Nowhere do I recollect laughing more consumedly than at Libertad. Much of the wild slang lay beyond my comprehension,

but M. Geraud, ex-captain of the Imperial Navy, was good enough to translate it into the French of the Philistine. Of the dinner no more remains in my memory than in my constitution, but some quaint choruses still haunt me, amid a general reminiscence of racket and laughter and constant motion.

Returning to "the store" at dusk, we found there a crowd of Indian girls, rather frightened and silenced, but quite ready to accept all the little Christmas gifts their new acquaintances pressed on them. Dance they would not, however, until the sermon was done. Upon this Geraud mounted a cask and preached in the local *patois*. His subject was the deluge, and he seemed to treat it in quite a novel way. The diggers cried and rolled about with laughter, too breathless to translate. Therefore I cannot tell you what views are held in Libertad about the deluge, but they seem to be mighty droll. All this is very unedifying, but, if a man desire strictness of observance, he must not spend his Christmas in a gold digging. This I can say, that our fun if wild and noisy was innocent. Could all those who went to church that day declare as much?

The Indian men and women heard Geraud to the end with perfect gravity and respect. That was the best of it. I saw several glance with surprised disapprobation at the irreverent foreigners. When the preacher descended breathless from his cask, amidst uproarious cheering in

all languages—for everyone but ourselves had understood this common speech—we strolled through the moonlight to see "Nativities." I am not sure that is the technical word, but it will serve. A Nativity then is a scenic representation of those events which we commemorate at Christmas, and each Nicaraguan housewife, unless she be a downright pauper, will have a peep-show of her own.

I had secured as my partner for the evening the prettiest girl of the fair, really a pretty creature and an heiress. Chattering gaily, she introduced me at the richest house of the village, where there is more wealth than appearances show. Here we saw marvels. The objects essential for a Nativity are three dolls, a toy bed, a cow, and a pigeon of wood, sugar, or plaster of Paris. With these, *à la rigueur*, the curtain may rise, but no family which respects itself would put such a mean exhibition on the stage.

Rich people have their theatre six feet long and nearly as many wide, and every inch must bear a toy or ornament. At the back is placed the bed and the three dolls in attitudes fitting, whilst the cow stands behind, and the pigeon dangles overhead on a string. The dolls, of course, may be wax, or china, or wood; may be jointed or not; dressed in gold or rags. They may be big or little; may move their eyes or no. Such details are regulated by a person's means; but the limited resources of Nicaragua generally confine the population to one

penny *par pièce.* Perhaps a regiment of tin soldiers stands next in order on the stage, then a few trees of painted shavings from a Noah's ark, and all the animals disposed about. Plaster of Paris images, pets of the ballet, copies from the antique, busts of Garibaldi, Napoleon, Bolivar, &c., tower above the Liliputian scene.

I do not exaggerate a bit. The importation of penny dolls, cheap doll's houses with furniture, Noah's arks, and all such things, is large enough to puzzle Spanish-American traders unacquainted with the customs of the country. All that one could fancy most incongruous is put upon these household theatres at Christmas time, for the adoration of the faithful. And that adoration is freely, solemnly granted, with crossings and genuflections and telling of Ave Marias. I could get no more smiles from my Indian maid until the last Nativity had been visited and reverentially saluted. How pretty she was! To think that bright-eyed fairy is now a wrinkled, grizzled beldame, with no more figure than a brown dress upon a peg! But she is not the only one changed.

These reflections are too painful. What a pleasant Christmas was that of 1871-2, which I passed with David Arnot, at Eskdale! Who in England knows the name of David Arnot? who in South Africa ignores it? He and no other gave us Griqualand West. Taking up the cause of Nicholas Waterboer when that chief's prospects were desperate, he fought single-handed against the Free

State and the Transvaal. Twenty years the struggle lasted, with daily peril to Arnot's life; but he gained the day. Waterboer and Monkoranne, in their gratitude, have made this fortunate politician the largest private landowner in the world. How many thousand square miles of pasture, how many fair daughters, Arnot possessed that Christmas time, I have no idea. All the ladies in our quadrille called him papa, and all were lovely.

But alas! there is no comfort in South African memories. Even the fair-haired, blue-eyed little thing who was youngest of all must now be rivalling the beauty of her elder sisters, as we admired it A.D. 1871. What a merry gathering it was at Eskdale! I drove from the busy anxious Diamond Fields to Hopetown, and in the cool morning time sped onwards, behind a pair of greys, the envy and delight of the neighbourhood. The springbok scattered from our path, their bounding flight arrested by no bullet in that kindly season. All the country side was flocking towards Eskdale. Youths galloped by on horseback, carts filled with ladies we passed. The scenery was dull and grey, the land burnt up, the heat more than tropical; but beauty—and dinner—were awaiting us, and no one regarded the unlovely *veldt*. Some of our most prosperous diggers were of the company, but the words "diamond," "carat," "claim," or "water" did not once get a hearing. The talk was of "home" and girlish things; the only outcome of it

laughter and pleasant frivolity. David Arnot sat smiling over all his broad, dark face in the midst of us, and with difficulty I obtained the few minutes of serious talk which I had come some hundred miles to obtain. Then there was racing, and shooting at the mark, whilst the ladies withdrew to rest a little before the dance. Delightful time! Let us try to forget that we are ten years older.

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by the watch, excluding three doubtful, I numbered one hundred and six.

But the Turkish war does not hang in one's mind like that of the Gold Coast. Its incidents were ten thousand times more awful, but between whiles one lived more or less in Christian fashion, with a clear sky above, the foe in view, and civilisation behind. The Gold Coast war was a six months' struggle with wood-demons, unseen, seldom felt, always threatening. How often at night, alone or in a bivouac of three or four, we heard the echoing beat of drums, the wail of cow-horns, and the superb chant of the Ashanti war-song. At each turn in the narrow path one travelled, a volley might issue from the trees. Why an enemy famed for enterprise and recklessness of life never tried to cut the road—the one road we had—is a question asked in vain.

It was not unusual, in the army as outside, to dispute Sir Garnet's claim to high ability. Experience and wider observation have shown me that our general had to face conditions wholly new, which he met with new tactics, and succeeded at every point. Greater merit than this cannot be claimed for a soldier. A fine confidence he showed when his strategy came to the test. One of memory's pictures freshest in my eyes is the small clearing of Egginkassi, Sir Garnet walking quietly up and down, cigar in mouth, and hands behind him, in a ring of fire. He had made the best dispositions pos-

sible, and it only remained to watch. The general had thought, had worked; now he called on his soldiers for their part. Aides-de-camp and messengers hurried out from the wood, gave their report, received cool instructions, and vanished. Wounded men came limping up, or were borne on stretchers, and the general had a word for each. I have seen commanders white with excitement, others that seemed stupid with anxiety. One great general, rather known than famous, walked to and fro, with head downcast, curiously picking lumps of earth, and scrutinising them with interest. I have seen only Sir Garnet, who was quiet, dignified, and wholly himself.

It was a quick journey I had before me, leaving Prahsu on Dec. 22, to arrive in Cape Coast Castle for Christmas Day. Dawn and dewy eve saw me tramping through the mud, my hammock swinging behind, and my carriers panting in the rear. The sky was visible only in those small clearings we had made, where a lonely engineer superintended the building of huts for the army soon to arrive. I reached the hospitable house of Mr. Selby at 10 a.m., when the inmates were preparing for church. Amongst these was a young clerk named Gould, a fine Devonshire lad, who died of fever some weeks afterwards. Neither of us felt inclined for church, and I sat in the balcony, watching a chief's house opposite, whilst Gould went to dress.

A mighty handsome girl was that chief's daughter, as beauty goes in negroland. An exquisite figure she displayed, her eyes were large, soft, and well opened, nose straight, and lips not too expanded for prettiness. As usual she was sitting under a palm-tree in the compound, whilst two or three slaves dressed her long wool. Operations of the toilet and cuisine were conducted all day long in that compound, where an indefinite number of wives, daughters, and slave-girls passed their abundant leisure. To me, drowsily amused by the scene, arrived young Gould in awful consternation. His costume was as artless as that of the Fantees outside, his face pale with alarm. "Oh, Lord!" cries he, "the devil is upstairs!"

"Where?" I ask, starting up.

"Sitting on my chair, by heaven!" Gould replies.

It was a chance not to be missed. I bounded up the ricketty steps and entered the room. Every chair was vacant! "It will be my turn next," I said severely.

"No, no!" exclaimed Gould; "look! he's there still!"

I looked, and sitting on the chair I saw a brown, soft, unformed lump, about as large as a man's fist. We drew closer and surveyed the object. It seemed at first a ball of fur, brown and prettily mottled; then great knees became discernible around the ball, then legs crouched up—a horrible spider, watching us with

big devilish eyes! My nerves have had much hardening against surprise, but that fearful brute shook them.

There is no creature in the world, not even the *pieuvre* of romance, so fiendish as the African tarantula. He measures from eight to ten inches from toe to toe. His legs are thick as straws, and his crimson beak is almost as large as a sparrow's, but curved like that of a parrot. Instead of claws he has suckers on his great feet, with which he clings until torn off piecemeal, whilst his jaws are buried in the flesh. Each pad leaves a painful blister, and the jagged wound of the beak is hard to cure, but persons die of the shock rather than the hurt.

Imagine Gould's escape! After bathing, he was just about to sit upon the chair when his eye caught sight of this monster. Fancy what might have been—the sudden pang, the grasp at that furry mass, the impotent rending at its immoveable hold, and the savage gnawing of the brute! I would rather be bitten by any snake in the list than by a tarantula. We speared this fellow on a bowie knife, unknowing at the time that natives say he can and does spring great distances to attack. I remember that I gave the *spolia opima* to Mr. Commissary Ravenscroft, who is interested in entomology. Only three tarantulas were met with in this campaign—that mentioned, one killed after a gruesome midnight struggle by Dr. Samuels, and one which

Captain Hart found on his bed in camp. Such was my little Christmas adventure on the Gold Coast.

And so, passing seasonable experiences of Paris and Vienna, I came to the last, that of 1878-9. It was at Quetta. I had expected to Christmas very drearily, with some promiscuous wayfarers like myself, hurrying across the frozen valley, to overtake General Stewart; for the batteries and detachments with which I had struck acquaintance in the Bolan were all left behind. Of the chief's position we knew nothing, nor of the forces already collected. General Biddulph had been reconnoitring from the Kojak Amram mountains for a fortnight past, and I reached Quetta in great alarm, fearing to be behindhand.

But a little army lay there, awaiting final arrangements, and my friend General Hughes did not propose to start until the 26th. I joyfully accepted a chance of feasting—it might be for the last time—at a civilised table. It dwells not in my recollection how I made the acquaintance of Captain Lister, R.H.A., but his kindness is not to be forgotten. Instead of sleeping in an airy tent, I found myself a guest in a little bungalow, of no pretension certainly, neither painted, ceilinged, nor carpeted, but sound enough to keep out the cold. Nor do I remember which amongst so many good fellows invited me to eat a Christmas dinner at the "station mess." Invited I was, however, and my servants duly paraded

with the rest at two p.m., each carrying his master's *couvert*, seat, and contribution to the feast. Chance guests like myself provided liquids, whilst *the* turkey and *the* piece of beef had been brought from India to fatten weeks before.

When we started for the banquet a servant went before, sword in one hand, and lantern in the other. We followed in long, sheepskin coats, our revolvers ready to the grip; for Quetta is the rendezvous of fanatics on this side, as is Peshawur on the other. When a Pathan, Ahtahzai, or Kakar, or what he may be, has worked himself to the murder pitch with *bhang* and prayer, he takes provisions and a knife to stroll into Quetta. Days or weeks he may be on the road. These *ghazis*, solitary or in pairs, have no such distinctive sign as the mirror and white robe carried by their fellows when forming part of an army. They go along like harmless travellers until the chance comes to hand. Then a sudden shout, "The merciful God is one!" a spring—and the knife is sheathed in a Kaffir's body!

But the *ghazi* will wait for a sure stroke, unless hunger drives him into rashness. His life is devoted for the faith; he will not escape, nor scarcely resist, but he will not fail if he can help it. In a case last year it was proved that the assassin had been many weeks hanging about the town. He had fallen ill before the chance came; had asked for and obtained attendance gratis at

the dispensary, and when cured had returned to his holy task. To me there is something that fascinates, whilst it shocks and disgusts, in the Pathan character. It may be admitted that I have some experience of savage life, and this I say, with such authority as shall be allowed me, that in strength of will and tenacity of purpose the Afghan has no peer. His intelligence, courage, and enterprise nobody disputes, and if the present Government had not stultified England and made her contemptible the Pathan might have become a very useful as a very important factor in our Indian problem.

The night was dark, and oh, so cold! The rugged mulberry trunk shone redly and vanished, as the lantern swung overhead; gnarled boughs made a network like twisted cordage. High on our right, dimly threatening through the haze, loomed the fort of Quetta. At each few yards an ice-bound watercourse must be leapt, for this valley, like that of Candahar, abounds in streams. Muffled strangers met us in the dark, with or without a lantern. I was warned to give such a cautious offing, until the common password had been exchanged. On this night, with so much movement between distant camps, it had been thought impossible to give a countersign, but "A merry Christmas!" was more pleasant and equally effective.

After a devious stumble—for Lister took short cuts—we reached the mess-room. There were four members,

I think, in ordinary times, for the regiments of the garrison messed in the fort, of course. And for these the little whitewashed chamber sufficed. But each had four guests, and each guest a servant or two. What a heat it was, what a squeeze, what jollity! Most had come provided with the thick felt overalls, drawing above boot and thigh, so needful for long sitting in that bitter climate, when a sheet of canvas only excludes the Arctic cold. Several had that woollen headdress called, I believe, a *cantope*, which covers forehead, chin, and shoulders like an ancient helmet. But sheepskins and the rest were promptly discarded, and we perspired in our jackets.

It was a mighty pleasant meal all the same. To-morrow the most of us were starting for unknown adventures in a country traditional for danger. That thought for the future gives zest to present mirth, and makes light of small disappointments. The turkey was uneatable, the beef an evil jest, the fresh vegetables from Lister's garden, preserved for this great event, roused mockery in the most forbearing. But Hobday told us stories, and Riley laughed like one possessed; somebody sang a song, a new and a good one. So the Christmas night passed merrily, and at half-past eleven we went homewards. The glass marked three degrees below zero.

To end the evening fittingly, as we sat by the fire in

his bungalow, Lister told me a few anecdotes from the record of murder compiled in our eighteen months of occupation. They were better than ghost stories, more dramatic, almost incredible, but too true. The day following we all went our ways: mine led me through Candahar to Khelat-i-Ghilzai; back through Quetta, Jacobabad, Lahore, and the Khyber, to Safed Sang; and so, after nine months' absence, home again. Lister was attached, with two guns, to Major Sandeman's escort, and I presume he returned to India by Tul and Chotiali.

Such are the strangest of the Christmas Days I have passed as yet. In a few years more I may publish a supplement, of which the first number is already in hand, for I passed the winter of 1880-1 in Constantinople. But the pitcher, as you see, has been often to the well.

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* Davidson's Advanced Drawing Models, £9.—The following is a brief description of the Models:—An Obelisk—composed of 2 Octagonal Slabs, 26 and 20 inches across, and each 3 inches high; 1 Cube, 12 inches edge; 1 Monolith (forming the body of the obelisk) 3 feet high; 1 Pyramid, 6 inches base; the complete object is thus nearly 5 feet high. A Market Cross—composed of 3 Slabs, 24, 18, and 12 inches across, and each 3 inches high; 1 Upright, 3 feet high; 2 Cross Arms, united by mortise and tenon joints; complete height, 3 feet 9 inches. A Step-Ladder, 23 inches high. A Kitchen Table, 14½ inches high. A Chair to correspond. A Four-legged Stool, with projecting top and cross rails, height 14 inches. A Tub, with handles and projecting hoops, and the divisions between the staves plainly marked. A strong Trestle, 18 inches high. A Hollow Cylinder, 9 inches in diameter, and 12 inches long, divided lengthwise. A Hollow Sphere, 9 inches in diameter, divided into semi-spheres, one of which is again divided into quarters; the semi-sphere, when placed on the cylinder, gives the form and principles of shading a dome, whilst one of the quarters placed on half the cylinder forms a niche.

*Davidson's Apparatus for Teaching Practical Geometry (22 models), £5.

*Binn's Models for Illustrating the Elementary Principles of Orthographic Projection as applied to Mechanical Drawing, in box, £1 10s.

Miller's Class Drawing Models.—These Models are particularly adapted for teaching large classes; the stand is very strong, and the universal joint will hold the Models in any position. *Wood Models*: Square Prism, 12 inches side, 18 inches high; Hexagonal Prism, 14 inches side, 18 inches high; Cube, 14 inches side Cylinder, 13 inches diameter, 16 inches high; Hexagon Pyramid, 14 inches diameter, 22½ inches side; Square Pyramid, 14 inches side, 22½ inches side; Cone, 13 inches diameter, 22½ inches side; Skeleton Cube, 19 inches solid wood 1¾ inch square; Intersecting Circles, 19 inches solid wood 2¼ by 1½ inches. *Wire Models*: Triangular Prism, 17 inches side, 22 inches high; Square Prism, 14 inches side, 20 inches high; Hexagonal Prism, 16 inches diameter, 21 inches high; Cylinder, 14 inches diameter, 21 inches high; Hexagon Pyramid, 18 inches diameter, 24 inches high; Square Pyramid, 17 inches side, 24 inches high; Cone, 17 inches side, 24 inches high; Skeleton Cube, 19 inches side; Intersecting Circles, 19 inches side; Plain Circle, 19 inches side; Plain Square, 19 inches side. Table, 27 inches by 21½ inches. Stand. The set complete, £14 13s.

Vulcanite Set Square, 5s.

Large Compasses, with chalk-holder, 5s.

*Slip, two set squares and T square, 5s.

*Parkes's Case of Instruments, containing 6-inch compasses with pen and pencil leg, 5s.

*Prize Instrument Case, with 6-inch compasses, pen and pencil leg, 2 small compasses, pen and scale, 18s.

6-inch Compasses, with shifting pen and point, 4s. 6d.

Small Compass, in case, 1s.

* Models, &c., entered as sets, can only be supplied in sets.

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